THE

FARMER

OF

INGLEWOOD FOREST.

A NOVEL

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INGLEWOOD FOREST.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

LOUISA, OR THE COTTAGE ON THE MOOR; DUNCAN AND PEGGY; ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES, PENITENT OF GODSTOW; MODERN TIMES; PILGRIM OF THE CROSS, ALBERT OF STRATHNAVERN, &c. &c.

"We do not always find visible happiness in proportion to visible virtue; natural, and almost all political, evils, are incident alike to the bad and good: All that virtue can afford is quietness of conscience, and a steady prospect of a happier state."

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CHAPTER I.

"INFERNAL remembrancer, what dost thou here?" at length exclaimed Fitzmorris. "Not all the malice of hell could have conjured up such another petrifying, though silent monitor. Is it not sufficient that my whole life has been embittered by my weak contrition, but that I must also be moved thus by the sight of a paltry ring? May not two be alike? Doubtless they may; and though

alone, I am ashamed to give way to so womanish a folly."

With these words, he again, yet with the utmost agitation, raised her hand, and drew off the ring that caused his alarm; Anna at the same moment uttering a deep and piercing groan, which added fresh terror to his guilt-struck heart; but soon recovering, he hastily approached the candle to examine the trinket more minutely; but, far from deriving the satisfaction he expected, found, to his yet greater dismay, it was the very identical one he dreaded, and particularly identified by the initials on the reverse. His first surprise had, in a great measure, overpowered the fumes of wine, and contributed not a little to recall some painful and long-banished remembrances. Seating himself by the table, lost in thought, he fixed his eyes on Anna, with a curiosity that totally overcame every other consideration; this,

this, however, soon gave place to alarm; for he now perceived her so violently disordered by the potion she had swallowed, that her whole frame appeared universally convulsed.

Fear was now his predominant passion; for should she die thus suddenly, it might have serious consequences. Mrs. Palmer would be immediately apprised, and might cause her to be opened; in which case, perhaps, the whole villany would be discovered. In short, his sensations were of that kind, that such men alone could only deserve, or ever experience.

He now hung over her, not with passion that was vanished, but with the most acute anguish, dreading, as the convulsions increased, that he should see her expire. At length, though still senseless, she began to scream, and that so loud, that he was convinced it must

echo throughout the house, and perhaps awaken Editha or Julia (for he did not much fear the housekeeper), whom he had no doubt would immediately hasten to the spot. This supposition made him at first determine to leave the room; but Anna becoming suddenly more quiet, though evidently struggling for life, he listened, and the house appearing perfectly still, ventured to remain and sprinkle her face with water; at the same time vowing, that if she escaped with life, he would never more have recourse to such desperate means; even the horror and amazement occasioned by the ring, vanishing on the contemplation of her agonies.

While thus employed, he was suddenly alarmed by the hasty opening of the door; and turning round, to his still further dismay and vexation, perceived Julia at his elbow, who, awakened by the screams, had only staid to put on a petticoat,

petticoat, before she ran to the spot from whence she conjectured they proceeded.

Though Julia started at the sight of Fitzmorris thus employed, and at such an hour, yet his confusion more than doubled hers; but passion, assisted by his natural arrogance, after a moment overcame every other feeling; he bade her be gone, demanding what business she had there.

"Business!" repeated Julia, "business!—more proper me ask what business you here?—No you slave now, massa. Me dream horrid dream—hear poor missey cry out—so run see what matter."

"And so did I also," replied Fitzmorris, recovering his usual cunning, and smoothing his ruffled brow. "I heard Miss Palmer scream; and not being gone to bed, hastened hither, and found her as you see, I fear in the agonies of death. You observed, Julia, that

I was sprinkling her face with water when you entered."

"Oh yes! me see dat sure enough: but, massa, why you no call? Poor soul," continued she, hanging piteously over Anna, "she die. Oh, she never wake more! den her moder die too. Oh! wish never come here."

"Wish you had never come here!" answered Fitzmorris, in a rage, which he could not immediately repress: "What do you mean by that, you black devil? Do you think any body has killed her?" But instantly recollecting the folly of exasperating her, added—"I am much grieved for her; can you judge what ails her?"

"No, bless heart!" answered Julia, gazing on her, "never see nobody so but once—she die! Poor mulatto! you remember pretty Jenny, massa?"

"Damn you!" exclaimed Fitzmorris, rage again overpowering cunning. "Name

"Name her again, and you shall have cause to repent it."

"Repent, massa! for what—for speak truth? Dat no harm sure in free country?—No slave here—no whipping-post."

"But there are pistols, infernal torment!" replied Fitzmorris; "and if you do not hold your tongue, those, or something worse, shall be your portion."

Anna at that moment began to struggle afresh, and to scream more violently than before; the dispute was therefore forgotten in her danger, Fitzmorris and Julia both assisting her to the utmost of their power.

In this manner passed the whole night; Fitzmorris, with seeming concern, towards morning calling the housekeeper and Editha, informing them that he had been first alarmed by hearing Anna's screams; and fearing some ill had befallen her, had repaired to her apart-

 ment,

ment, and found her as they now beheld her.

Editha, half-distracted at the situation of her friend, was the first that mentioned medical assistance; nor had the frowns of her father, which used to silence her in a moment, the least effect—" Alas!" cried she, " what was night, or the distance from Hounslow! I would myself have almost flown in such a case for any human creature, and much more for my beloved Anna."

Fitzmorris, thus pressed, ordered his old housekeeper to go to the town and procure help, as he well knew she would be absent the longest time; judging that, if Anna survived, the effects of the potion must, by her return, be exhausted, and beyond the power of being discovered by the person she brought with her.

Fitzmorris judged rightly, the strength of

of his infernal dose being evaporated, but not so its effects. Anna soon after, with heavy and repeated groans, opened her eyes, and casting them mournfully around, they rested on Editha, who, enraptured to see her a moment free from the dreadful convulsions in which she had so long struggled, threw herself by her side, and watered her face with her tears. Anna in a few minutes began to appear sensible of her attentions; and, throwing her arms around her neck, exclaimed, though faintly—"Oh! the wine! the wine!"

Had the sentence of death that moment been pronounced against Fitzmorris, it could not have produced a more striking effect; he trembled from head to foot; his face turned to a ghastly pale, and his teeth chattered, as if in the paroxysm of an ague.—"She—she—is delirious!" at length hesitated he—"she drank no wine but a glass with you,

 Editha;

Editha; that, you know, could not hurt her! Her head is affected, and she merely says what first strikes her imagination."

Fitzmorris's agitation was not lost on either Editha or Julia, but caused different surmises in each bosom; the former simply wondered at his confusion; while the latter found her suspicions corroborated by his behaviour, and surmised the truth; for she knew her former tyrant capable of similar villany.

At length the old housekeeper returned, accompanied by a surgeon, who, examining the state of Anna, declared her in a high fever. Fitzmorris immediately caught at this report, and affirmed that she was delirious, as a fresh proof to strengthen the decision; rejoicing to find himself so apparently safe from detection, he now collected his scattered spirits,

spirits, and became as boldly calm in guilt as others are in conscious innocence.

Fitzmorris's assertion that Anna was delirious, was not, however, entirely without foundation; for though she had intervals of recollection, yet her head was greatly deranged.

At length she began to appear more composed; and Fitzmorris left the apartment, ordering the reluctant Editha to attend him, and make breakfast.

The discourse turned entirely on Anna; concerning whom Fitzmorris, more particularly than before, questioned his daughter, who, however, without falsehood, gave simply such answers as she conceived would raise her in his estimation, being well aware of the deference he paid to fortune, shewing him also the pearl bracelets which she had the

evening before presented her; and asking timidly, in her turn, "if he did not think it necessary Mrs. Palmer should be immediately acquainted with her illness?"

"By no means," replied he, peremptorily; "a few days will, I hope, render it needless; it would therefore be only alarming her to no purpose."

Fitzmorris would fain have introduced the subject of the ring, but guilt made him cautious; he dreaded lest Anna might hereafter recollect she went to bed with it on, and also had no expectation that his daughter knew any thing respecting it.

"Do you not think it very extraordinary, sir," said Editha, "that Anna's mind should dwell on the wine she drank last night at supper? I recollect too, that even before she went to bed, she said the wine had disordered her, and that

that it was very agreeable when she drank it: had not that circumstance better be mentioned to the doctor when he comes again?"

Fitzmorris muttered an oath between his teeth unnoticed by his daughter, to whom he replied—"No, fool; if the wine had been injurious, would it not also have affected you?"

"I should suppose so, sir," answered Editha, mildly; "yet she, it is plain, attributes her illness to that cause; and I have heard my aunt say that wine is frequently adulterated with unwholesome drugs, to render it intoxicating."

"Dolt! idiot!" exclaimed Fitzmorris, stamping on the ground with rage, "begone! leave the room!—No, now I reflect," continued he, calling her back, "the fever may be communicative; do not therefore go into Miss Palmer's apartment; you will only humour her whimsies; and, without being of service, catch the malady."

"Not

"Not go into Miss Palmer's chamber, sir!" said Editha, bursting into tears. "Oh! do not keep me from Anna! she loves me, as I do her, dearly; and no one's attentions will be so well received as mine. Indeed, I mean no offence; I simply thought the wine——"

"Curse the wine!—again am I to be tormented with the subject! Fool, would you infer that, as I served her with it, she was poisoned?"

"Poisoned, sir!" repeated Editha, shuddering: "Oh, my father! how can you thus cruelly treat your poor child?"

"Be gone then to your own apartment," said he. "I will think—consider—and let you know my resolution in half an hour."

Editha immediately obeyed and retired, shocked at the behaviour of her father, and deeply impressed with sorrow at the situation of Anna.

Fitzmorris,

Fitzmorris, on being left alone for some time, walked up and down the apartment in great disorder: he saw with horror that the allusion Anna made to the wine had impressed itself on the mind of his daughter, and trembled for the consequence. At length he, however, resolved to remove Editha, under pretence that the fever was communicative; to call in more assistance, if necessary, to Anna; and, at all events, if there was no change for the better in two days, to send off an express to Bath for Mrs. Palmer.

Editha, on leaving her father, had retired to her own room, and sat weeping alone when Julia entered, she having left Anna for a few minutes under the care of the housekeeper. "Ah, Julia!" said Editha, "what shall I do? my father has forbidden me to come into Anna's chamber, lest I should catch the fever!"

You

"You no catch the fever, Missey," replied Julia; "she say only wine make sick. Ah! Missey, me see all night long, when massa no let you be call—so fast sleep—eyes open—shock your heart — laugh — scream — cry — never wake Missey."

"It is very odd, Julia," said Editha; "I never heard of any one before being attacked in so strange a manner."

"Nor me, only once before. Poor mulatto Jenny, she more worse than Missey.—Oh! me glad me bad dream last night—make me hear poor child scream."

"And could you conjecture," replied Editha, "what had disordered the mulatto? I remember her well; she died about a year before my mother."

"Ah, Missey! me know very well—your moder well know too what kill her.—Your fader teaze, teaze poor mulatto because she pretty; but Jenny love your moder, have no ting to say with

your

your fader. One night your fader make she drink glass punch—den poor Jenny sleep — sleep — sleep — no strength, no life—den massa use ill. Poor Jenny cry so sadly, and tell me—me tell you moder—moder try comfort poor Jenny—Jenny have no comfort—poor Jenny die—Missey not live long—so grieve!"

"Great God!" exclaimed Editha, her face and neck covered with a deep crimson, "you must surely mistake. Did you see Jenny during the time she slept?"

"See! ah, see sure enough.—Jenny sleep all day—only fit make know she alive—just like Missey, only more worse."

Editha's head now sunk on her bosom; and she only replied by entreating Julia, on no pretence whatever, to leave Anna a moment. She was no sooner alone than she gave free vent to her tears, and recollected with horror some circumstances

cumstances that corroborated Julia's story, such as the affection and pity her mother always expressed for the young mulatto, and the dislike her father had to hear her named. She also remembered that, on the evening before, he had fetched their wine from the sideboard, though there was a bottle on the table—a trifle which she at that time thought immaterial, but now assisted to strengthen her fears.

Editha knew not what measures to pursue; she wished to save her father's honour, but determined also, though she should never see Anna more, to rescue her from the danger Julia had imprinted on her mind; she therefore resolved, should her father insist on separating her from Anna, to write to Mrs. Palmer, though without a signature, and inform her that Anna's health was in a very precarious state.

Fitzmorris at that moment sent for her down stairs; and on her entrance informed her, with more than usual kindness, that the surgeon had again seen Anna, and declared the fever yet higher than in the morning; therefore he could not risk her life by continuing her in such a situation, but would forthwith take her to a school in Hounslow until the danger was over. He also told her his valet was arrived, and Mrs. Fitzmorris was much the same as the day before.—Editha courtesied acquiescence, though never had her heart felt so cold to the commands of her father; never before had she contemplated him with so little reverence; but the sorrows of her mother, the death of the mulatto, and the situation of Anna at that moment, obliterated every other idea.

It may easily be surmised it was not the fever Fitzmorris was fearful of; he dreaded even the eye of his own child, and

and shuddered lest her belief should strengthen the assertion of Anna respecting the wine.

Editha had no sooner returned to her apartment (for the old housekeeper remaining with Anna, she did not dare to enter that, lest her father should hear of it) than she sat down and wrote a letter to Mrs. Palmer, but without signature, and simply containing these lines:—

"MADAM,

"Your dear daughter has been taken suddenly ill; I wish you could come to her. I hope, however, she is in no immediate danger. Shew this to no one.

"From your friend."

When Editha had concluded and folded her letter, it first struck her that she

she did not know Mrs. Palmer's address at Bath, not being aware that the residences of all new-comers in that city are easily discovered. For some time she was puzzled how to act, but at length determined to send it at all events, and also to write, in case that should miscarry, one to Godwin, whose address she well knew, having often seen Anna direct letters to her mother and the family.

Her letter to Godwin contained nearly the same words, with the addition of a postscript, signifying where Anna then was. Editha's invention was now put to the rack, to devise means how to send her well-meant epistles. At last she recollected that, as the postman every evening, when he passed the house, blew his horn, they might easily be conveyed to him by Julia, whom she well knew would readily obey her. Julia some time after calling in to inform her that Anna was more composed, she told her

of

of the step she had taken, and entreated that no persecution nor menaces might force her, who was now Mrs. Palmer's servant, from her young mistress.

Julia faithfully promised to watch over Anna with the utmost care, as also to give the letters the following evening to the postman; and Fitzmorris sending soon after to inform his daughter that his chaise was at the door, Editha again warmly recommended Anna to the care of Julia; and, with a heavy heart and overflowing eyes, attended him to the school where he proposed to place her.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.



Fitzmorris, though he had designed to have no confidant nor accomplice in his plot against Anna, yet found himself so tortured with the pangs of conscience, or something like remorse, that he, on the following evening, determined to reveal the whole of what had passed to his old friend and counsellor, the valet before-mentioned, who had grown grey-haired in the service of iniquity, and well knew every occurrence of his past life.

Anna being in some measure more composed, his anxiety became considerably relieved on that head; but curiosity and mingled anguish, occasioned by the ring, again disturbed his imagination; and

and while he was undressing, prompted him to consult his staunch emissary. The fellow, however, presumed to censure his master on the subject of the dose that had been administered to her.

"I wonder, sir," said he, "you would venture it, when you had already witnessed its effects. To be sure it was only a mulatto wench, and her death of little consequence; but in the present case it might cause inquiries that would produce serious consequences. As for the ring, I am amazed that can give you the least uneasiness; for what, except money, is more commonly transferred than rings? It may have appertained to a dozen owners since it was in your possession; for it is not probable that it should have been preserved as a pledge of——"

"My perdition!" exclaimed Fitzmorris; "but to appear at such a time and place, strikes me with horror and amazement;

amazement, and might almost surpass belief—to rise, as it were, from the bowels of the earth, where I thought it deposited, to snatch the victim who was incapable of resistance from my eager embrace! By Hell, I could almost think the interference supernatural! The sight in a moment petrified me; even yet my blood chills at the recollection!"

Much more passed on the subject; but before the conclusion of their discourse, the valet had, in some measure, calmed his master's emotion, by persuading him that chance alone had most probably placed it in the hands of its present owner. He also persuaded his patron from any more attempts on the innocent Anna, as her birth and fortune might make it dangerous.

Fitzmorris was too much alarmed by what had passed not to resolve to take this advice, as far as it regarded the in-

fernal arts he before had recourse to; yet could not determine wholly to give her up. "I will," said he, when alone, "if possible, persuade her, by fair means, to love me after my own method, and fly with her to the Continent. If this fails, I will sooner marry than lose her. Her fortune will, no doubt, be large; and, hateful as matrimony is to me, I shall at once gratify my love and interest."

Thus resolved, Fitzmorris retired more composed in his mind; the most distant idea of a refusal never obtruding on his imagination.

On the following morning Anna was somewhat better, her fever being considerably lower; she particularly inquired for Editha, and being informed she was removed, appeared greatly depressed. "Alas!" said she, weeping, "how unhappy am I! Had I been ill at home, I should

should at least have had the satisfaction of being surrounded by my friends; now I appear alone, and shall die without being blessed with seeing them."

"No, no, Missey," replied Julia, who was alone with her, "see all soon; and no die, me hope. Julia nurse day and night, and make well, to shew good moder she no buy Julia for nothing."

Anna felt soothed by the unaffected kindness of Julia, who informed her, though without hinting her suspicions of Fitzmorris, that Editha had written privately to Mrs. Palmer, and also to her father, as she thought the presence of either would be consolatory in her present situation.

This intelligence was a powerful restorative to the spirits of Anna, who flattered herself, that in a short time she should see some of her friends. She then inquired after Fitzmorris, who,

Julia told her, was yet in the house; to which Anna replied—"I am grieved to give him such trouble: he is very kind to me, and I know not what makes me so ungrateful; but I hope he will not come to see me."

In two days the youth and natural good constitution of Anna, assisted by the indefatigable cares of Julia, began to overcome the shock it had sustained; but she was even yet incapable of leaving her bed. Fitzmorris had not presumed to visit her; but contented himself with sending into her apartment frequently, to inquire after her health.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE the innocent Anna was thus in the power of a wretch whose passions knew no control, the family at Inglewood were performing the last duties to Emma, whose request respecting the manuscript had been strictly obeyed.

William and Fanny, truly judging it could contain nothing but what would tend towards giving additional pain to their aged parent, determined to have no auditors whatever to the perusal, willing to draw a veil over the errors of Emma, even to their own children.

Accordingly, one night, when the whole family were retired to rest, they, in their own chamber, prepared to begin

the narrative—William taking up the manuscript, which, in many places, was scarcely legible from tears—Fanny, her head reclined on her hand, listening with attention, sorrow, and mingled dread, to the recital of vices that filled her with horror, while William began as follows:—

"Confess your sins to God, and recapitulate them to your own heart—were the words of the venerable man to whom I owe my being; and who yet, in spite of my manifold transgressions, has poured balm into my soul, by not spurning my unfeigned, though late contrition. I dare not, however, prefix his honoured name to this black recital, for Prostitute has no claim to that of a worthy family; to such she is civilly dead, and, like a rotten branch, cut off from the parent stock. Emma alone will I then call myself; and may the name be forgotten and obliterated with me! for I have overwhelmed

overwhelmed a father with sorrow, and raised the burning blush of shame on the cheeks of a mother!

"With a bleeding heart I will truly retrace my crimes. Ah! would to Heaven that either tears or prayers could obliterate them!—but they are too heinous; and though they have rendered life hateful, yet my guilty soul sinks at the thoughts of death, for the fascinating tenets that first beguiled me are vanished. Horror alone now strikes my guilty mind, and loudly proclaims, that even the grave affords no peace for such as have wilfully incurred such a weight of sin and shame.

"Oh, painful remembrance of forfeited happiness, and the pleasurable days of innocence!—would I could recall ye!—but ye are fled for ever; and nothing is now left of the once gay and happy Emma, but an emaciated, polluted shadow!—sad monument of the effects of vice! Ah! would to Heaven I could

persuade one misguided daughter of Folly to dash from her lips the gilded cup which holds the empoisoned draught of Flattery, or snatch back one victim from the paths of Destruction! but as I have lived, so shall I die in vain!

"When you read this, my beloved friends, I trust I shall be consigned to the silent grave, insensible of the shame that must otherwise overwhelm me, on having my crimes thus laid open. Oh, William, on you, at this awful moment, I particularly call, when my guilty soul is shuddering before its Creator! Hear my request—hate me not, my brother. Alas! I repent; and my sin is ever before me! Remember our days of happy infancy, when hand in hand we walked together. At a more advanced age, you saved my life from the fury of an enraged bull. Oh, William, had I died then, how happy!—what guilt had I been spared!—what anguish would you have escaped! Oh! remember your joy

as

as you bore me home unhurt to my parents! how fondly you kissed my cheek as you gave me to my mother's arms! Remember all this, my brother, and do not curse my memory.

"I will now begin the narrative of shame; but, alas! my hand trembles, and my eyes are dim with tears! Unavailing sorrow! thou art now too late; in the days of my delusion my hand was steady, and my eyes sparkled with the intoxication of vanity! You know all previous to my going abroad—I will therefore speak from that period; yet no—it is not sufficient; I will probe my guilty heart with the recapitulation of the insensibility I shewed to my mother's grief at my departure, and the little respect I paid to my father's admonitions. I tore myself from their encircling arms; pleasure appeared almost to give me wings to reach London. You, William, seemed hurt at my unfeeling conduct, and bade me farewell in a voice less

tender than usual; but I was deaf to all, and leaping into the chaise, soon wiped off the tears that had involuntarily escaped me.

"Edwin was uncommonly thoughtful during the whole journey, and I recollect told me not to mention to Mrs. Delmer on my arrival how much he was attached to Agnes, as, he said, she had dissuaded him from the match, and it might, improperly divulged, injure his future prospects.

"On my arrival in town all contributed towards my undoing. Dress, pleasure, flattery, at once assailed my weak mind. Whitmore had the art to persuade me he should obtain a divorce from his wife, and would marry me. I also, by degrees, imbibed his tenets, and became a professed free-thinker, for he used to engage me in controversies that I was not able to defend; and to bear down my reason by his volubility and erroneous maxims, dressed in flowery language,

guage, until I was forced to yield the point, though at the same time my heart bore testimony of their fallacy. The discovery of Edwin's marriage was first revealed to me by Whitmore, who had heard it from his wife's gallant; and who doubtless gained the intelligence from that lady's having caused Edwin to be watched.

"Alarmed at a quarrel he had in consequence with Darleville, in an evil hour, forsaken of God, I consented to accompany him, firmly persuaded that in a short time I should be his wife. But in France, fascinated by pleasure and dress, I became his mistress; and, by a natural degradation, was soon perfectly satisfied with my situation, having sufficiently imbibed his ideas to pride myself in seeing how much he was devoted to me, uncompelled by religion or law; so that, when he afterwards informed me how greatly a divorce must injure his fortune, I readily gave up the thought. In short,

my only ambition was to reign in his heart; I knew no happiness but his affection, no wish beyond giving him pleasure. All, however, was not calm within; my heart frequently reproached me, and I stifled reflection as much as possible. I sometimes wept at the remembrance of my friends, whom I regarded as given up for ever; for I could not bear the most distant idea of a meeting with those whose tenderness I had so ungratefully repaid.

"We staid some short time at Paris, and from thence travelled to Montpelier, then returned again to Paris, and from thence to Brussels, where the unhappy Whitmore lost his life in the prime of his days, and in the height of his sins. Oh, merciful Father, have pity on him! Nursed in the school of vanity, he imbibed vices and destructive tenets from those improperly placed around him; had his education been virtuous, he perhaps had been so too.

How

How much greater my crime! born and reared with beings faultless as Heaven ever created man, I rushed into guilt, and erred against my own heart!

"The death of Whitmore was to me a severe blow, though it did not awake me to repentance, my whole animosity resting against Edwin. Heaven, alas! suffered *him* to be the scourge of my offences, and, great God! to be also the terminator of them.

"Perhaps, at the time of Whitmore's death, the voice of Gentleness might have recalled me to the paths of rectitude; but Edwin's was harsh and hateful to me; for how could a man, who had violated the most sacred duties, who lived himself in open adultery, and whom I considered as the murderer of Whitmore, have influence to persuade me to abjure vices he was equally guilty of? To return home was horror—my mother dead, and I the guilty cause, what reception could I hope? Let me also confess,

confess, the thoughts of giving up the grandeur and luxury in which I had lately lived, had its weight with me.

"A gentleman, of the name of Hartford, who attended Whitmore at the meeting with Edwin, endeavoured all in his power to serve me, or rather to gratify himself, by plunging me yet deeper in error; he had, however, art enough to assume merely the appearance of friendship to beguile me—a trap that my youth and inexperience readily gave into; and to avoid my brother Edwin, I readily agreed to accompany him to Holland: from thence I was to embark for England. Naturally volatile, travelling soon overcame the bitterness of my sorrow. Hartford was profuse in his attentions and presents, and plainly began to shew his views. My heart was cold to love, but not to pride. I deliberated; and the consequence was, that, oh shame! I thought his protection preferable to humiliating

miliating myself before my family. In short, in five months after Whitmore's death, I became his mistress.

"All thoughts of England were now given up; I strove to banish reflection; and, firm to the doctrines implanted by Whitmore, regarded the life I led as nothing more than acting according to reason and nature. The temper of Hartford was not dissimilar to that of Whitmore; he loved show and pleasure, and spared no expence to gratify my taste for dress; but he played deep and without skill, and was frequently duped.

"When I had been with him somewhat more than a twelvemonth, we agreed to pass a winter at Paris, and soon reached that city. I was now quite inured in my situation: my appearance usually procured me admiration, and I sought no farther. Character I regarded as a trifle below the consideration of a woman of understanding and spirit. I must, however, confess, that I dreaded

to

to be alone, as a thousand unpleasant ideas were sure to intrude; and even in dreams respecting my family, have I frequently awakened myself with violent paroxysms of grief.

"One evening that Hartford had been in company with some Englishmen, where the play was more than commonly deep, he lost considerably, doubled and trebled his bets, but was still unsuccesful; at length, in a fit of desperation, he made a final throw for the shattered remains of his fortune, which was before this considerably impaired. The cast was decisive, and Hartford found himself in a moment deprived of all, his opponents receiving drafts and securities for the whole he possessed.

"On his return home, his appearance alarmed and shocked me. He threw himself on a chair, uttering an unconnected string of curses; and, I believe, had not my screams alarmed the domestics, he would have terminated his life

even

even in my presence! When he was rather more calm, I learned the extent of his loss, and was not a little grieved to find it so heavy, both on his account and my own; for though I could not love him, his kindness and generosity had attached me to him.

'Emma,' said he, 'you are universally admired in Paris, and I cannot be so greatly your enemy as to wish you to suffer for my misconduct; I would therefore advise, and indeed wish you, to accept the protection of some man of fortune, who might be able to more than repay you for the loss of me: for my own part, I have no resource but returning to England, where, I believe, I can make sufficient interest to procure a commission; but was I even to obtain that, must be obliged to my uncle, who has very rigid notions: I dare not take a female companion with me. I have about fifty pounds in my escrutoire, which we will divide; half that sum will

carry me thither; and, perhaps, with the remainder, and by the sale of some of your superfluous appendages, you may be able to make yourself tolerably easy, until some fortunate circumstance occurs.'

"Prostitution was not yet so habitual to me but my soul sunk with horror at the idea of another change; and I know not what resolution I might have formed, had not temptation, which my accursed vanity could not withstand, again fallen in my way. I wished to assist Hartford, for I could not bear the idea that he should go to England so slenderly provided; I therefore, two days before his intended departure, went in the hired carriage, which we had not yet discharged, to a jeweller's, and informed him, that, having a new necklace and earrings setting, I wished to part with those I shewed him. While we were bargaining, a carriage stopped, and an elderly gentleman stepped out to give some orders. He viewed me attentively;

and I soon recollected him for a financier, whom I had frequently seen at different public places, and whose name was De Forlaix. As I did not choose to continue my business before a third person, I left the jewels, and desired the man to let me hear his determination on the day following, the financier very politely leading me to my carriage.

"Hartford's loss was so considerable that it had been much talked of, and in consequence reached the ears of De Forlaix, who, on the jeweller's informing him of my business, readily surmised the truth, and took his measures accordingly.

"The jeweller called on me in the evening, and having agreed for the jewels, he respectfully took his leave, hoping, as he expressed himself, that they were not going to lose the finest woman in Paris. Compliments, however gross, were always pleasing to my depraved heart; I therefore complaisantly

replied,

replied, that I should at least remain some time longer in that city. Having forced Hartford to take about seventy pounds, we separated with concern on both sides, but without anguish; for, as I had never loved him, my greatest affliction was how I should afterwards dispose of myself. Sometimes I thought of parting with all my superfluities, of returning to England, and learning some business, by which I might obtain a livelihood; but I had been too long accustomed to idleness and dissipation, to form a determined resolution on the subject; though I must do myself the justice to say, that I believe I should have adopted it, had not, as I before said, temptation again beguiled me, as I regarded such a step as a kind of preliminary to a reconciliation with my friends.

"On the morning after Hartford's departure, my servant informed me a gentleman requested to speak with me on business. Having admitted him, I was

not

not a little surprised to find it De Forlaix. 'Madam,' said he, 'I have done myself the honour of waiting on you with the new jewels that you expected some days since; I hope they will meet your approbation; if not, any alteration shall be made that you can wish.'

'New jewels!' replied I, with astonishment; 'I expected none; nor can I judge from whence such a mistake proceeded.'

'Pardon me, madam, it is no mistake. Did you not say some days past to the jeweller, where I had the honour of seeing you, that you had a new necklace and earrings setting?'

'It is true I said so,' answered I, somewhat confused at my duplicity being discovered; 'but these are not what I expected.'

'Indeed but they are,' replied he; 'for I have the jeweller's receipt in your own name for them, and you would

hardly

hardly have paid four hundred Louis for what you did not approve.'

"He then placed the jewels and receipt, which was in the name of Hartford, before me, adding—'He has also commissioned me to return your jewels, as they do not suit him; and there is likewise an acknowledgment for the two hundred which he advanced for them, and which you cannot deny to have repaid, as I know to the contrary, being your agent in the business. I have only to add, that if you have any more commissions to execute, you see before you the most attentive of your servants.'

"De Forlaix's intentions were too manifest to be mistaken; I however, for the present, declined accepting his jewels; but he was too profuse and assiduous to be long denied by a woman so naturally depraved. In fine, a short month beheld me transferred to a third keeper!

"De Forlaix knew no bounds, either in

in his affection or generosity towards me. He had a wife; but that circumstance I was too vile to make an objection; and as I had an ample allowance, and was inferior to no kept woman in Paris for splendour, gave myself no concern on any other subject.

"I had lived in this state for near six years, when one evening, in the public walks, I contracted an acquaintance with an English adventurer, of the name of Davis. He was about my own age, handsome, and accomplished; but dissipated and thoughtless, having, in the preceding seven years, expended a respectable property. For this man I conceived a most violent affection; and, regardless of the kindness of De Forlaix, prostituted my person without any former incentives; for I had no wish for grandeur or dress unsatisfied; it was therefore depravity, and the satisfaction of unbridled passion, that alone led me to this fresh vice.

Some

"Some short time previous to my forming an acquaintance with Davis, I became pregnant—a circumstance that gave the utmost pleasure to De Forlaix, who had no children; but was not powerful enough to restrain me from forming a detested intimacy with a stranger. About two months after this new connexion, madame De Forlaix died suddenly; and some time after, my situation being then visible, M. De Forlaix, as nearly as I can recollect, thus addressed me:—'Your conduct, my dear Emma, during an intimacy of more than six years, has been all I could wish, and your present situation adds to my affection: I therefore propose, when a decent time has elapsed, to make you my wife; I am rich enough to defy censure; we will retire to one of my country-seats, where, I trust, you will make me a happy father.'

"The generosity of this offer overcame me, and conscious unworthiness made me

me unable for some moments to reply; but De Forlaix resuming the conversation, said—'You do not answer me, Emma; you change colour: surely my proposal does not meet your displeasure?'

'Displeasure!' cried I at length; 'alas! how is that possible? but you do not consider what you say; my former life, before I became acquainted with you, I have openly revealed; and can you be generous enough to make such a woman your wife?'

'I can,' replied he; 'for a woman, who has behaved as you have done for six years, I can venture to trust through life; besides, our marriage will legitimate my child, who will by that means become heir to my fortune. Your former misconduct shall be entirely forgotten. I regard your first deviation as an error of youth; the second occasioned by necessity, and but the effect of the first; in which point of view, I also consider

your complying with my proposals at the beginning of our acquaintance. You have frequently lamented being estranged from your family: this step, I flatter myself, may conciliate them; we will send them a certificate of our marriage; and some months hence, perhaps, I may take you to England; for they will hardly refuse you their forgiveness, when they find you so advantageously married.'

"The compunction for my falsehood to so generous a man was too powerful to suffer me to thank him as I ought; but he was too partial to me to attribute my emotion to the right cause; and, repeating his determined resolution, he left me. I was no sooner alone, than I began to reflect on what had passed; the advantages I must unavoidably reap from a marriage with De Forlaix, I was by no means blind to; it would at once give me respectability with the world; at least, where my former life was unknown. I should be secure of a competency,

petency, my child of a good fortune, and, what had also its weight with me, perhaps in time I might presume to hope for a reconciliation with my friends. My affection for Davis was a considerable impediment to this scheme, but not violent enough to influence me to decline it; for De Forlaix was most indubitably the father of my child, as I was pregnant two months before I became acquainted with Davis: I therefore determined to inform him of De Forlaix's generous offer, and in future decline all acquaintance with him; for, abandoned as I was, I could not endure the thought of so grossly abusing his kindness, and bitterly reproached myself with my former misconduct. Thus determined, I wrote to Davis, declaring my resolution, and entreating him to give up all future thoughts of me; expressing, however, the pain this effort cost me. Davis was of a disposition not easily to be repulsed; he replied, that if

I was determined, he must per force submit; but that he was resolved to see me at all events once more, and therefore warmly pressed me to meet him at his own lodgings, where, shame to say, I had frequently been before.

"Had my intentions been really virtuous, I should have answered this letter with a positive denial, confessed my unworthiness to De Forlaix, and have thrown myself and expected infant on his mercy; but not so did I act; the measure of my iniquities was not complete, and the sword of vengeance trembled over my guilty head. For some time I wavered, but at length concluded that one more meeting could make little difference, as I wished to part amicably with a man whom I persuaded myself I loved: I therefore returned him an answer by my own servant, who well knew letters frequently had passed between us, and agreed to see him on the following evening, provided he would promise

promise to require no future interview. To this he acquiesced; and in an hour fated for the commencement of my earthly punishment, I repaired alone to his lodgings, little aware that the treachery of my maid had that very day revealed the whole correspondence to De Forlaix. My own conduct had taught her dissimulation and ingratitude—could I then wonder that she followed my example? Davis lived at about the distance of a mile from Paris, in a house situated in a garden belonging to a widow woman, who, with his servant, composed the whole family.

"The fatal night of this meeting, Davis had sent his man out on business; so that the woman alone remained below. I had scarcely been there five minutes, before a loud knocking was heard at the door, and the moment after, to my inexpressible confusion, the voice of De Forlaix, who exclaimed, in answer, as I suppose, to the woman who had de-

nied my being there—'It is false—I saw her enter; deny her at your peril!' These words were scarcely articulated, when we heard his steps on the stairs; and a moment brought him to the door, which was only secured by a slight and crazy lock. There was no time for reflection, nor was I capable of any; for, overpowered with shame and confusion, I had sunk into a chair, and concealed my face with my hands. Davis, in the mean time, had snatched up a pistol, the report of which, and the forcing the door, were both instantaneous, and filled me with despair and horror; for starting from my seat, the first object that presented itself was De Forlaix on the floor, weltering in his blood.—'Ungrateful woman!' exclaimed he in a faint voice, 'is this the return for my partiality and unbounded affection? Was it necessary to add murder to ingratitude? Weak, deluded wretch that I was, I could not believe the evidence

of

your confidential servant! Alas! conviction has cost me dear! the hand of death is on me!'

"Exhausted by the loss of blood, he fainted as he uttered the last word, when, thinking he had expired, I entirely lost all knowledge, and fell on the floor; in which situation Davis took me in his arms, and bore me into the next apartment. Seating me on a chair, he returned to the chamber where De Forlaix still remained on the floor, and the woman of the house weeping and wringing her hands over him, exclaiming, she was ruined for ever, and should be punished as a principal in the murder.

"Davis, as he afterwards informed me, laid De Forlaix on the bed, bound up the wound, which was in the shoulder; and when he came to himself, assured him he should have immediate assistance; then left him alone with the woman, securing both by bolting the door of a passage that separated that

apartment from the rest; he then returned to me, who was just recovered from my swoon.

'Emma,' said he, in great agitation, 'we have no time to lose; De Forlaix, I fear, is dying; I have secured him and the woman, at least for some time; for the house is too distant from the public road for them to give a speedy alarm; the present moment is therefore ours, and perhaps all that is left us is to escape, for certain death awaits us if we remain; let us fly then; my servant will return in an hour at farthest, and procure assistance, if De Forlaix still survives. Nay, do not hesitate; we may now escape, but the least delay will render it impossible.'

'I will not go,' replied I: 'Unhappy wretch that I am, I am still no murderer.'

'In this case,' answered he, 'you will be equally involved; I therefore again entreat you to fly. Say, can you calmly

calmly resolve to stay and bear the torture?'

'Oh, Heavens!' exclaimed I; 'I dare not—I will indeed fly; but whither? without friends or money, where can I go?'

'To Flanders,' replied he; 'I myself am but indifferently provided; however, at all events, life is worth preserving. More conversation passed; but the distraction of the moment prevents my recalling it to memory; I only recollect that I obliged Davis, before I would leave the house, to go again to De Forlaix, whom he found much in the same state he had left him, except that his binding the wound had stopped the blood. He then again secured him with the woman; and taking my trembling hand, we left the house together, our whole property consisting in about fifty Louis-d'ors, which we had in our separate pockets."

When William reached thus far in

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the manuscript, he paused, and for a moment laying it down, thus addressed his wife :—"I wonder not, my beloved, that you cover your face; such recitals, I thank Heaven, we are not accustomed to; even my blood appears to chill in my veins, on the reflection that such a woman ever called me brother."

"Her crimes, I trust, are expiated," replied Fanny; "and, thank Heaven, we alone shall be acquainted with the extent of them; for not for the wealth of India would I ever have our dear parent shocked with the recital. But proceed, my love; we will not break on the peace of another evening, if possible, with even the remembrance of what we hear to-night."

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

WILLIAM again took up the manuscript, which for nearly a page was almost unintelligible, the letters being in several places effaced by tears, but which appeared to contain bitter self-accusations and expressions of despair; he therefore passed it over, and began as follows:—

"We travelled night and day until we passed the frontiers, and even then only staid until we could get safely to England, where we arrived almost without clothes or money. It was now that Davis began to shew himself in his true colours: too indolent to exert himself for his own support or mine, he urged me to prostitute myself for both! I had, however, sufficient spirit to resent this

proposal in the highest terms; and it completed the disgust I had for some time entertained for the man whom I regarded as the author of all my misfortunes.

"The benefits of De Forlaix now returned with double force to my memory; and being deprived of them, enhanced their value. I saw myself also on the point of becoming a mother, to an infant who would be bound to curse me, as its birth must now be infamous; whereas but for my vice and folly, its mother's shame would have been concealed under the name of a respectable father, and itself heir to a considerable fortune; while now, on the contrary, I dreaded its birth, lest it should share, or perhaps increase, my own miseries.

"Davis finding his endeavours ineffectual to reduce me to his infamous intentions, even treated me with brutality; and one evening so far forgot himself, as to give me repeated blows. Stung to madness

madness by this insult, my rage knew no bounds; I cursed him and myself, and calling him by every epithet that passion could dictate, rushed out of the sorry apartment where we lodged, leaving him, doubtless, very glad to be rid of me.

"Behold me now a wanderer in the streets of London, without money, or even a place to rest my head! Suicide was my resolve; and inquiring the road to a village I had heard named, had no doubt but in the way thither I should meet with some piece of water, where I at least might terminate my earthly woes; for the reflection of what might happen hereafter never obtruded on my imagination.

"Heaven, however, saved me from that crime; I wandered through the fields in vain, and found only ditches or stagnated pools, too shallow for my purpose. At length, exhausted by fatigue, I sunk under a hay-stack, in a paroxysm

of

of despair, where I sought my pockets for some instrument of death, but found neither knife nor scissars. Tears were now my only refuge; I wept until, like a wearied child, I fell asleep, my late pampered body exposed to the night-wind, and my only canopy the spacious blessed firmament. I awoke at day-break, my spirits not only recruited by rest, but also the idea of suicide much weakened. I sat for some time pausing what method I should pursue, but could fix on none determinedly; for poor, friendless, and pregnant, the prospect was cold and dreary before me; all application to my friends, however, I was now more firmly than ever determined against, both on account of my poverty and situation.

'I will walk,' said I, 'through this great and busy city to-day, and resolve on future prospects; some lucky thought may perhaps occur; if not, I can but again rest here, or adopt the determination

determination of yesterday. Oh, Inglewood! Inglewood! happy residence, why did I ever leave thee? thou hadst no grandeur to bestow, but thou hadst content; no riches, but peace and an unblemished conscience; no pleasures that leave a sting behind; no pangs of remorse, such as I now feel.'

"The rising of the sun, and the cheerful matins of the lark, I had long been a stranger to.—'Ah!' cried I, 'I once celebrated the return of morn as cheerfully as ye do; but, dead to happiness, the glorious sun has now no charms for me!' I advanced towards London, ruminating on my melancholy situation; for the clothes I had on, and a few halfpence, were all I possessed. I had some few articles of raiment at Davis's lodging, but those I determined never to claim, as it could not be done without again seeing the man whom I now detested.

"After I had wandered some hours, I began to experience the cravings of

hunger

hunger; and again the idea of self-destruction came strong into my fancy; when passing a shop, containing a variety of articles, I was struck with these words on the window:—'Money lent on Pledges.' This immediately gave rise to a thought that I before had no idea of. I had in my pocketbook a miniature of Whitmore, set with brilliants, that I had for some years always carried about me; and this for two reasons; the first of which was, that he was particularly dear to me; and the second, that the picture being once seen by De Forlaix, he had appeared dissatisfied that I preserved so carefully the remembrance of another man. From this period I had constantly kept it concealed; nor had Davis ever seen it, or he had doubtless deprived me of it, as he had before done of my watch. Drawing it, therefore, from my pocketbook with a heavy heart and tottering frame, I entered the shop, and presenting it to the man behind

hind the counter, requested him to favour me with the utmost sum he could advance on it.

"The fellow having viewed me with an impudent stare, doubtless taking me for a woman of the town, replied—'A devilish handsome fellow, egad! you have been crying, I see—one of your old favourites I suppose. Well, never mind—he will be perfectly safe here—worse luck now, better another time—drink a glass, and keep up your spirits; you are too fine a woman not to have plenty of business.'

"Humiliated as I was, I however replied tartly to this insult; and the man, after a number of preliminaries, lent me the sum of ten pounds, declaring he could not advance a shilling more. With this I departed, comparatively happy to what I was before, determined to provide some food immediately, and a lodging before night. Having satisfied

my

my appetite, I walked in pursuit of an apartment, and soon found one suited to my circumstances, being only three shillings per week, and in the house of a widow who kept a shop. I here purchased a change of raiment, and likewise some of the cheapest things I could procure for my expected child; for every trifle I expended made me tremble for the future.—One day, that I had been out to buy a loaf, turning hastily round the corner of a street, to my great surprise, I encountered Hartford in regimentals. He expressed at once pleasure and pain to see me, the distress I had undergone being visible both in my person and habiliments. He informed me, that his uncle, with some difficulty, had procured him a commission on his arrival in England, which was all he had now to trust to; and that he was, in the course of a few days, to embark for the West Indies, where his regiment was

ordered—desired to know my address—and promised to call on me the ensuing morning.

"Hartford was true to his appointment, and I related all that had befallen me without equivocation. He expressed much concern for my misfortunes, as also at his inability to assist me as he wished; but, before he took his leave, being to depart on the morrow, presented me with a bank-note for twenty pounds.

"In about a month after this, I was seized with the pangs of labour, and delivered of a lovely girl. Oh God! the cruel remembrance yet wrings my heart! with what anguish did I weep over her—with what bitterness did I accuse myself, deprecating my folly and vice, that had ruined her even before she saw the light! She was now all the world to me; and, nursing her at my bosom, I appeared to live for her alone.

"By the strictest economy my money lasted

lasted seven months; at which time my babe was uncommonly strong for her age: it was now that poverty appeared to me with redoubled horror, as the slender diet I could obtain likewise deprived her of her proper nutriment. I can truly affirm, that I had no intention to return to a life of prostitution, but rather thought of gaining a livelihood, if possible, by industry; and therefore inquired of my landlady repeatedly, whether she could not procure me any needlework.

"Her endeavours had been, until the period before mentioned, unavailing, when one morning she informed me, that some ladies, who lived fronting us, had inquired for a sempstress, and desired me to apply. Taking my infant in my arms, I went immediately, and was introduced to an old lady and two young ones, who received me very politely; but I was not such a novice but I could immediately discover that they

were

were women of loose character. They admired my child, and paid me many compliments on my own person; the old woman particularly inquiring my age; and on my answering I was in my thirtieth year, appeared not to credit me, saying that I did not look more than twenty-two. In short, they kept me all day; and, before we parted, the old woman had proposed to take me into her society, and furnish me with whatever was necessary.

"I gave no immediate reply to this offer, being determined to try what I could earn by my work; but at a week's end, found it so little, that I began to deliberate on the subject; and, going home the same evening with what I had been intrusted, found the old woman in earnest conversation with a man elegantly dressed, but who bore the appearance of an emaciated debauchee. He greatly admired my infant, paid me many extravagant compliments, and,

finally,

finally, presented me with a note for fifty pounds—a temptation which my poverty could not resist; and I promised to sup there the following evening.

"Accursed promise! would I had perished before I pronounced it! or would to God my infant had been nourished with my blood before I consented to support her at such a price! Oh! cruel—deadly—horrid! my brain burns, and I must lay down my pen! I will go and pray; but will Heaven hear the contrition of such a wretch as the abandoned Emma?"

"I resume my pen: I will probe this guilty heart by the recapitulation; I will relate how I murdered my infant—the smiling angel, to whom I, infernal prostitute! administered poison in the salutary form of milk! Enabled by the present I had received, I dressed myself with more care than I had done for many months, and repaired to the old

woman,

woman, where I found the wretch I had seen the day before, and who received me with peculiar pleasure. In short, temptation again fell in my way, and I purchased a hundred pounds at the expence of what was a thousand times dearer to me than the vital blood that warmed my heart. The old woman could not now bear me to leave her; my child also was the darling of the whole set; and all was riot, which they called pleasure, for three days, when I began to find my health uncommonly disordered, as well as that of my child, and soon discovered (do I live to relate it?) that her pure blood was contaminated as well as my own, in consequence of the acquaintance I had so lately formed. I cannot proceed! I have in vain tried to describe the agonies my cherub suffered, until her once clear and transparent complexion was changed to the deadly hue of saffron; suffice it, she died, and left me the most unhappy—most cursed!

Oh!

Oh! my head—my heart! Pardon me—the recollection even yet disorders my brain!

"I was mad for six months after her death, in which state medicines were forced down my throat, that restored my bodily health; but my senses were long imperfect; during which period I can only remember I was frequently cruelly and brutally treated.

"When I regained my understanding, for the first time in my life, I stifled reflection by the use of spirituous liquors, for the old wretch had made me considerably her debtor, and now commanded my obedience to all her infamous* demands. In short, I became regardless and hardened to all that befel me. I had been in this situation about four years, when one evening at the play, casting my eyes around, I discovered my brother William, who was so little changed, that I instantly recollected him; and seeing that he also apparently knew me,

me, determined to fly him, for, degraded as I was, how could I bear his presence? My father too, I had no doubt, must be dead; and reproaches and hate were all I could expect. Had I at that period been fortunate enough to be apprised of his kind intentions, oh! how joyfully could I have submitted to be the most menial of his servants! but I was destined to suffer more miseries, and feel how far guilt and sin may lead their votaries. For six weeks after I saw my brother I never left the house, so fearful was I of meeting him; nay, I believe I could have preferred instant death to standing in his presence, so truly sensible was I of my own shame and unworthiness. At length, driven by the repeated threats of the old woman, whose slave I completely was, I again ventured abroad, and in St. James's Park, by chance, met with the servant whom Davis in his flight left at Paris.

"We recollected each other instantly, nor was I displeased at this rencontre, as I had ever ardently wished to learn the termination of a business to which I owed my final ruin; I therefore entreated him, after common inquiries had passed, to gratify my curiosity on the subject.

'You may suppose,' answered the man, 'that I was greatly surprised, on my return home, to find the doors fast, and to learn what had happened, from the window where the woman of the house stood watching for me, requesting me to climb to one of the lower casements and release her. I immediately did so, and next fetched assistance to De Forlaix, whose wound, though severe, was not found dangerous; for in six weeks it was completely healed.'

'Blessings attend you for that intelligence,' exclaimed I, interrupting him in a transport of pleasure; 'you have removed

moved one mountain of guilt from my surcharged bosom: but proceed—I am all attention.'

'On his recovery, he caused diligent search to be made after you; and soon learned your destination, and how you was accompanied. This intelligence appeared to grieve him, and he retired to his seat in Picardy, where he died about five months since; but, before I proceed, tell me, madam, whether the infant you was pregnant with be living?'

'No,' replied I, with astonishment at the question; 'it is dead, and with it all that could make life bearable to me.'

'I am sorry for it,' resumed the man; "you doubtless are unacquainted that M. De Forlaix had left it, on being properly authenticated, a handsome fortune, whether boy or girl, and to the guardianship of his brother?'

'Generous, noble De Forlaix, what a viper didst thou foster in thy bosom! But proceed, sir,' continued I in despair.

 'I poisoned

'I poisoned my child, the darling of my heart. But go on—let me hear all.'

"The man looked shocked; he doubtless thought me distracted.—'I have nothing more to add,' returned he; 'nor should I have known so much, but that I, having no money to bring me to England, procured a service in Paris, where I have remained till lately; for Mr. Davis owed me a year's wages when you went away, and his clothes were stopped for arrears by the landlady.'

"This intelligence disordered me too much to hold more conversation; I therefore soon after bade the man farewell. On my return home, I gave way to the anguish of my heart, and from that time sunk into a gloom that nothing could overcome; threats of being thrown into prison I disregarded, and grew daily more callous to ill usage, which the old woman was by no means wanting of: liquor alone now reduced me to her purposes, and this was not spared; for though

though no longer young, I was a favourite in the house, my understanding being rather more cultivated than that of my companions, and likewise from some acquirements I had obtained.

"One night, about eight months since, she pressed me so earnestly, that I consented to go to a masquerade, with two unhappy girls that were lately become inmates of our house: during the amusement, I sat wrapped in my usual gloom, and at an early hour returned home, leaving my companions engaged in riotous parties.

"I expected to be reproved for my haste; but, on the contrary, the old wretch expressed her satisfaction, informing me, that a gentleman who frequented the house had been there that evening, and introduced one of his friends, a man of considerable fortune, but who was so much in liquor that he was obliged to be put to bed; concluding by desiring me to take my place by his

 side.

side. I had drank a great deal of wine at the masquerade, and made no objection, but prepared to act as she desired, by taking a candle, and going to the apartment.

"The stranger, by his breathing, appeared completely intoxicated, and to sleep uneasily. I therefore determined to undress myself as quietly as possible, for I wished him not to awake; for, though vice was become habitual, yet it was hateful to me since the death of my child. An uncommon heaviness and dread also hung on my spirits, and the scenes of my youth dwelt strongly on my imagination. Determined to banish remembrance, I went to my closet, and drank a glass of spirits, when a whim seized me to look at my companion: I therefore took the candle, and opened the curtains; his arm was thrown over his face, so that little of it was discernible; but the light causing him to move, I hastily snatched it back, until perceiving

ing he was again perfectly still, I seated myself on a sofa at the farther end of the apartment.

"I had accustomed myself to give way as little as possible to reflection, but this night it involuntarily stole upon me. 'Ah!' sighed I mentally, 'accursed be the hour that first I saw the light; born to plunge my parents in dishonour and an untimely grave; to destroy my beauteous smiling infant, yet to live myself, though daily involved in fresh crimes, abhorred by the virtuous, scorned even by my partners in vice, hateful to my self, and abandoned of God! Horrid retrospection! when will this scene of depravity end? When will my eyes close in everlasting forgetfulness?'

"A dread of futurity at that moment suddenly flashed on my fancy, and made me shudder; but determined to shake it off, I started up, and had recourse to a second glass of spirits, to deaden the pang of conscience. Powerful as was

 this

this soporific, it did not immediately take effect; I reseated myself on the sofa, and for some time remained lost in thought, until the liquor I had drank overcame me, and I dropped asleep, my head resting on the back of the couch. My eyes were no sooner closed, than either the thoughts that had employed me waking, or the immediate providence of Heaven, interposed to snatch me from destruction, to save me from a crime against which nature revolts, and that must have plunged me in yet tenfold guilt.

"In my sleep, which was uncommonly heavy, I dreamed that Whitmore, Hartford, De Forlaix, Davis, and several other men, were pursuing and driving me with swords and different instruments of torture, through a narrow and thorny road, until I reached the top of a prodigious mountain, where there stood a monster so horrible, that in spite of all their weapons, I started back; but the beast

beast advancing towards me, and finding no resource, methought I leaped the tremendous steep, where I must have been infallibly dashed to pieces, had not my mother caught me in her arms, saying—'Miserable wretch! is it not enough that you have plunged me into the grave, but you must recall me again to earth, to snatch you from destruction?'

"The alarm occasioned by this dream made me cry out aloud in my sleep, which disturbed the stranger, who jumped out of bed, asking what was the matter? This totally awakened me, though I could not for some moments reply; but sitting up, I endeavoured to recover from my terror, relieving my overcharged heart by a flood of tears, and at length exclaiming—'Ah! no, it is indeed too late; shouldst thou even, oh, blessed spirit! be permitted to return to earth, thou couldst not now snatch the devoted Emma from destruction! the doom is passed, and my tor-

ments here are but preludes of those to come!'

"The stranger replied by a loud and tremendous oath; and snatching up the light which was burning on the table, presented it full in my face—he at once discovering the wretched Emma—and I the abandoned Edwin!"

At this passage the manuscript fell from the hands of William, who, struck with horror, fixed his eyes in silence on the pale cheek of his trembling wife.

"My beloved friend," at length cried Fanny, pressing him affectionately to her bosom, "be not thus moved—the mercy of Heaven providentially saved them."

"Saved them!" repeated William. "Oh, God! is it possible that such should be the children of our virtuous father and sainted mother?"

"Alas!" answered Fanny, "virtue is not hereditary; but for Emma all our

fears

fears are now calm; she rests, I trust, in the bosom of peace; her errors were indeed great, but their expiation was terrible. Ah, William! the situation of Edwin is far more dreadful, perhaps even yet revelling in vice, until, like a blast of lightning, it shall strike him, without time or preparation. But proceed, my love; you have, I doubt not, heard the last of Emma's errors. This warning was surely decisive."

William again took up the manuscript, and continued.—"Oh, God! what were my sensations at that moment! Edwin, as well as myself, was unable to articulate a word, but remained for some time with his eyes fixed on me with an expression of horror; for astonishment had overcome the fumes of wine. Like myself, I trust, he felt the hand of Heaven upon us, and resolved to tempt destruction no farther; but, alas! if he felt contrition, his expression of that sentiment

was very different from what I experienced; for being in some measure recovered from his first surprise, his rage knew no bounds. Never, depraved as were the company I was accustomed to, did I ever before hear such dreadful and tremendous execrations; justly, however, upbraiding me with my infamy, and, finally, dressing himself, he hastily rushed from the house, before the anguish and horror occasioned by the foregoing scene had left me sufficiently able to reply by aught but tears.

"Midnight brawls were too common in this detestable house for this to be noticed; I passed the remainder of the night alone; and, for the first time for many years, threw myself on my knees, thanking my Creator that he had, amidst my numberless transgressions, at least saved me from so deadly a sin as that, whose very name chilled my blood with horror.

"I remained in this posture until day,

and

and during the time formed the determined resolution to brave the worst that could befall me, rather than have recourse to my usual way of life: my spirits were, however, overpowered with the shock they had received; I found my head giddy, my throat parched with drought, and, by noon, was in a burning fever, which, for near a month, baffled all the power of medicine, and which, even when vanquished, left me in a state of melancholy, that frequently impaired my senses.

"I had never failed, in my lucid intervals, informing my abandoned hostess of my resolution of embracing death rather than returning to my former vices; but she regarded this merely as the effect of sickness, and doubtless thought she could, as she had before done, seduce me to her wishes; her rage was therefore unbounded, when she found me determined, and equally regardless of threats as promises, and,

above

above all, strictly resolved to drink nothing but water.

"One day that she particularly pressed me to renew my former infamous course, I hastily snatched up a pair of scissars, and clipped off my hair, saying—'There is one of my flattered adornments destroyed, and know, that if nothing else could save me, I would make myself a spectacle of horror and disgust, sooner than I would again submit; but that is not necessary—I am a free woman; if your conscience will permit you to swear I am indebted to you, do so; I am willing to go to prison; it will be heaven to this polluted house.'

'Then go you shall,' replied she, with an oath, leaving the apartment; and next morning was true to her word, for I was arrested, and thrown into the Fleet prison.

"I bore this calamity with thankfulness, as it removed me from such a scene of guilt. Money or valuables I had none, for

for the old wretch had stopped all, and I must have perished, but for the humanity of my fellow-prisoners; the virtuous part of whom however treated me distantly, when it was known from what house I came.

"I had been in this place about four months, when one night I again dreamed of my mother, who I thought still looked with great severity, but presented me with a Bible; and putting it in my hand, vanished. I immediately awoke, and determined, as soon as it should be light, to ask all over the prison, until I had borrowed a Bible; and accordingly in the morning, applied to several of the prisoners, before I could procure one, and which I at length obtained from a poor widow, who was confined for the funeral expences of her husband.

"From the time I left Inglewood to the present moment, I had never opened that sacred volume, whose doctrine I had learned to contemn, and whose precepts

cepts I had derided: I now seized it with avidity, and ran to my own apartment, where, having seated myself, I casually opened it at the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, where these immediate words struck me—'I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.'

"For a moment the book dropped from my hand; but snatching it up again in a transport, I pressed it to my lips, and vowed, if ever in my power, though I should beg my way home, to obey what I regarded as a sacred injunction.

"About a month after this, as I was reading, one of the unhappy girls who resided with my wicked creditor, called to inform me that their house by some neglect had taken fire in the night, and that its vile mistress had been so severely burnt, that her life was despaired of; in consequence

consequence of which she had sent to entreat the presence of a sister, with whom, for many years before, she held no communication, being as respectable a character as my creditor was the reverse.

"This relation however obeyed the summons, as the girl informed me, bidding me hope the best, as she was certain I should not long remain a prisoner —a prediction that was verified that very day-week, when I was informed an elderly lady inquired for me, and who, on my attending her, announced herself the sister of my creditor.—'You are free,' said she, viewing me with a look of pity—'I have discharged your prison dues, and you are at liberty to go when you please; the unhappy woman, at whose suit you were confined, is dead, and has left me heir to what ill-gotten wealth she possessed; but never shall my children be enriched by the spoils of prostitution · it shall be expended in the relief

relief of those wretched women to whose misery she has so largely contributed. I have heard your unhappy story; and to you, as a proper claimant, I present the first offering, entreating you to pray that Heaven may grant her that mercy she denied to you.'

"As she spoke, she gave me a paper containing twenty guineas; adding— 'You are, I hope, fixed in the resolution that caused your removal hither? and should you want a friend, apply to me; you shall meet every assistance in my power.'

"I threw myself at the feet of this generous woman, thanking her as well as my emotion would permit; and when somewhat calmer, recapitulated my intention respecting my journey home, and also the previous events of my life.

"She did not listen to them unmoved; and when I concluded, replied— 'By the common course of nature your father is dead. I, however, applaud your

your motives; but should you find it as I predict, and circumstances render home inconvenient, return to me; I am not rich, but can, with the exertion of your own industry, secure you from want or shame.'

"She soon after left me, giving me her address; and this woman, so generous, disinterested, and humane, was simply the wife of a linendraper, but whose humble virtues might have dignified a coronet.

"On her departure, after returning my unfeigned thanks to the Power whose hand had led me through this affliction, I prepared to depart, calling first on the widow of whom I had borrowed the Bible, and insisting on sharing my purse with her—an offer she would fain have declined; but in which I was so peremptory, that she at length acquiesced; and I had the pleasure to see her compound the debt with her creditor, and regain her liberty at the same time with myself.

As

As few objects, in respect of raiment, could be more wretched than myself, my first care was to purchase a change of linen, and the gown I wore on my return to Inglewood, in which I went to bid adieu to my benefactress, who received me kindly, and would willingly have advanced me more money; but I declined it, assuring her I had a sufficiency to carry me home.

"From her I went to procure a place in one of the Carlisle coaches, but all were full; and it was two days before any were to set off again. Disappointed at this intelligence, I took a place in one that was on the point of departing for Grantham, as that would at least advance me above a hundred miles on my way. The money paid, I entered the vehicle, my whole baggage contained in a pocket handkerchief.

"I had but one fellow-traveller, a woman, and remained lost in thought, revolving on the reception I might expect

pect to meet at Inglewood, when, a few miles beyond Barnet, I was alarmed by the cry of 'Stop!' and a moment after, a horseman made up to the carriage, presented a pistol, and demanded our money. The moon shone bright, and reflected full on the face of the highwayman, whom, to my inexpressible terror, I recognized to be Davis!—an involuntary scream escaped me; but he repeating his demand with execrations, and my companion having given her purse, I also presented my little all, which he snatched from my hand, and galloped off full speed..

"Though deprived of the means by which I meant to reach home, I however could not avoid looking back with thankfulness to the Power who had awakened me to a sense of my errors, and retraced with agony the effects of debauchery and sin, my heart blessing God in silent adoration for having separated me from so infamous a companion, and

and likewise that I was unknown to him, as I sat in the corner of the coach, with my face totally concealed by my bonnet.

"At length we arrived at Grantham, where I had not even the means to procure a breakfast, and with a heavy heart leaving the coach, my little bundle in my hand, I pursuing my way on foot, contemplated how my exhausted frame could ever reach the end of my journey, which was yet a hundred and seventy miles. Determined, however, to persevere, I walked until evening, when, being almost frozen with cold, I entered a cottage, and entreated assistance, offering the contents of my bundle for a quarter the money it had cost me. The woman of the house refused my offer; but bidding me draw near, stirred up the fire, and soon set meat before me, telling me I was welcome, and that, poor as she was, she would sooner give than take from me. In short, this good crea-

ture

ture kept me all night; and in the morning, before my departure, gave me a small loaf, a piece of bacon, and a slice of cheese; bidding me farewell in a manner that called forth my warmest gratitude.

"The weather was uncommonly severe, and during the rest of the journey, which I was a fortnight in performing, I met with no similar instance of humanity; so that, though I sold my few trifles, I was almost perished with hunger, as well as overcome with cold and fatigue. At length I reached the entrance of the Forest, and began to retrace the happy haunts of my youth and innocence; but my heart sunk with conscious guilt, and I dreaded to stand in the presence of any of my family. My father I represented to myself as dead, and feared the reproaches of my brother. I had eat nothing all that day, and it was night when I reached the neighbourhood of my nativity; the snow too began

began to fall in such quantities, that the face of the earth was covered, and it was with much difficulty, as I passed the church, that I could find the spot where our family are buried; nor should I, but for the old yew-tree that distinguished it. Concluding that the grave of my mother was not far distant, I knelt and prayed aloud, regardless of the time or the weather that had drenched my garments, until I was almost unable to rise. At length the church clock struck ten; and again entreating the protection and support of Heaven in the arduous scene I had to undergo, I resumed my way; but exhausted with fatigue, and cramped with cold, my limbs refused their office, and I fell several times in my road from the church home.

" When I reached the gate, how can I describe my sensations! In spite of the cold, that had nearly frozen my blood, a genial warmth for a moment seemed to revive my heart; and I can truly

truly declare, I entered it with more pleasure than I had before abandoned it: but soon again my spirits forsook me: I contemplated the dire effects of my crimes, and my heart failed. The house was all dark and silent, nor for worlds could I have assumed the courage to knock. I stood trembling with dread and irresolution, until my wearied limbs would no longer support me; when, making a last effort, I determined to crawl to the woodhouse, and there said, 'If I die before morning, I shall at least have the satisfaction of resigning my spirit near the happy dwelling where I received it.'

"Thus determined, I reached the shed; but there soon lost all remembrance. A heavy sleepiness appeared to oppress me; but I felt no pain, nor knew any thing more, until, blessed moment! I found myself once again in my father's house, with an affectionate and merciful brother hanging over me.

"Oh, William, may this act of tenderness and humanity be rewarded! May thy children be the glory of thy present day, and the blessing of thy old age! May they never cause a frown on thy brow, nor a blush on their mother's cheek! May they grow up examples of virtue and innocence, worthy to live, and not afraid to die! May thy unhappy sister be the last, as she is the first, disgrace to her family! and with her death, may both her errors and her sorrows be forgotten!

"Oh, my beloved friends, I have but little more to add! I feel the hand of Death is on me; and my short day of vanity is terminating with a long and gloomy night! Oh, pray for me, my brother—my sister, pray for me! Let your pure souls intercede for the wretched Emma! Heaven is never deaf to the prayers of the virtuous, and will hearken to you, though its gates of mercy should be barred against my petitions! Pray

too

too for the lost, unhappy, abandoned Edwin!

"Oh, my father, I cannot close without imploring a blessing on your venerable head!—Though it passes my polluted lips, oh, let it be heard at the throne of Mercy! and may the tears you have shed for your unhappy child, be the last that ever may wet your cheek! May blessings multiply around you, until the hour you shall be called to a happy eternity! but, oh, there, my beloved parent, must the wretched Emma be for ever shut out! Oh, mercy, mercy! Methinks a tremendous voice sounds in my ears—'Go, thou accursed!' Ah! no, my father, you said it was sinful to despair; I will go pray, and endeavour to hope!

"Another day do I behold the glorious sun! another day is given me for repentance! Merciful God, I thank thee! Something whispers me that I have but few more remaining. Oh that

I had profited of the many I have thrown away! Alas! my eyes grow dim, and weakness pervades my whole frame! Perhaps it is the last time I may be able to hold the pen; if so, Heaven have mercy on me, and bless my dear friends!"

Thus ended the narrative of the unhappy Emma, which Fanny and William bedewed with their tears. At length they retired to rest, shocked at what they had read, and determined, at all events, to conceal it from their parents.

CHAPTER V.



On the following morning, when the family met at breakfast, the maternal eye of Fanny fixing on her eldest son, read an uncommon anxiety in his features, and immediately inquired the cause, which, however, Reuben passed off as a trifling indisposition, and soon after accompanied his father to a neighbouring village, where some business called him.

"What is the matter, my son?" said William, in his way thither. "I see with concern that your health declines, your usual spirits are fled, and some concealed uneasiness appears to prey on your mind. I had flattered myself, that in a family so affectionate as ours, one

would not have had a thought necessary to conceal from the whole."

"Nor have I, my dear father," replied Reuben. "I am uneasy almost without knowing why; and frequently, even myself, endeavour to account for the melancholy that overpowers me. I can truly say, that was the whole world laid before me, and I had the choice of my state, I would not change my present one. It is true, I wish that Anna was not in that hateful London. Do not you think it strange, my dear father, that the post brought us no letters last night?"

"Rather so; but we can have no fears for her safety; next post we shall doubtless hear of her. Mrs. Palmer is perhaps returned to London, and they may be on the point of setting out for Inglewood."

"May they never again leave it!" replied Reuben, warmly. "Surrounded by my family, I feel myself the most blessed

blessed of human beings—not an individual in it but what seems necessary to my happiness; but deprive me of one, and my heart is cold; and though I accuse myself continually with ingratitude to the rest, yet were my life at stake, I cannot banish it."

More conversation of the same sort passed between the father and son; but all of which tended towards confirming the former that the latter had conceived an affection for Anna; which, however it might be restrained within the bounds of reason, would nevertheless embitter the peace of his future life. On their return home, William finding no one present but Godwin, Bernard, and Fanny, began a conversation on the subject; giving his opinion respecting the uneasiness of his son, and asking their joint advice.

"Were it not," said he, "for the un-

happy examples we have had in our own family, of the effects of trusting youth in large towns, I should think of placing Reuben where he might study some profession, which might divert his mind from this unhappy inclination; as law, physic, or divinity."

"Nay," interrupted Bernard, "for his soul's sake, never make the boy a lawyer: it would be a wicked action; and you would have it hereafter to answer for."

"Why, surely, my dear father," replied William, with a smile, "you would not infer that all lawyers are wicked? Doubtless there are many virtuous."

"Like enough," answered Bernard; "but they never came within the scope of my knowledge."

"Indeed, my dear father," returned William, "you are wrong to condemn a whole body of men for the errors of a part. Believe me, there are many worthy pillars of the law, whose merits exceed

all

all praise; and that written in the hearts of their countrymen, will be transmitted from generation to generation, though writing should be prohibited, and printing destroyed."

"I knock under," cried Bernard. "Here is the health of all such in a bumper; and in their journey through life, may they never meet a man that reveres and honours them less than I do! Let the boy be a lawyer then; for as for a parson, his face has not the right cut, and would never do for a pulpit."

"And why," inquired old Godwin, "should you think so?"

"Why! Why because he looks too merry. The dog too has a sly look. A parson's face should be like a standing pool, unruffled with any breeze, except when it 'creams and mantles' with the prospect of a good fat living. Besides, I do not think the boy would like to be a parson."

"Perhaps not," answered William.

"But what say you to physic, or rather surgery?"

"Why those will never do," returned Bernard. "A fine surgeon truly!—why he cannot kill an old hen. Oh, he would cut a *sorry* figure for a surgeon! Then for your physic: it would surely be a sin and a shame for such a strong handsome fellow as Reuben to waste his time in listening to the complaints of old women (for who, the pies, would be fool enough to trust him with the young ones?) spreading of plaisters, rolling up pills, or making drenches that would poison a horse! Besides, he would have no business in the country: he must go to London; and there we should lose him for good."

"If he must be a profession," said the elder Godwin, "I must confess I see none equal to the church; for what man so truly respectable as the worthy minister of his Creator—the comforter of the afflicted—the reprover of the wicked—

the

the protector of the widow—the father of the orphan—and the friend of all mankind!"

"But where will you find him?" answered Bernard, dryly. "I never heard much of our parson's comforting the afflicted; then for reproving the wicked, I suppose it is for that purpose he gets drunk four times a-week with 'squire Joice; and as for protecting widows, and being a father to orphans—who helped the poor old widow and her children at the mill? Not the parson, I trow. Nay, never frown—I have let the cat out of the bag undesignedly; but the widows' prayers and the children's blessings——"

"We will change the discourse, if you please," interrupted Godwin, gravely.

"Ay, ay," answered Bernard, "you may hide your light under a bushel; but it will burn through and blaze out. However, I mean no offence—so let us, as you say, change the subject; I vote for the law."

 "Nay,"

"Nay," answered William, "if we find it absolutely necessary, Reuben must determine for himself. Were it not for this unhappy prepossession, the avocation of his father is what I would have chosen for him—the profession of man, in the unvitiated state of nature, who reaps what he sows, and feels the power of his Creator in every wind that blows, and his providence in the glorious sunshine. But why are you silent, my love?" continued William, addressing his wife. "Your counsels ever better my opinion, and are desirable to us all."

"My advice then," replied Fanny, "is, that you think no more of a change of situation for Reuben. We know him now strictly virtuous, and all our hearts can wish; but who could answer for his stability at so early an age, were he thrown into alluring and dangerous situations? Let him then remain at home, a farmer like his father; time may perhaps remove this partiality for Anna, if it

it is so; but should it not, and we find it mutual, we are not without resource."

"Name it," returned William.

"Bid defiance to censure, which can never injure us, declare the truth, and unite them," replied Fanny. "Think you not, that could my beloved sister look from her seat of blessedness, she would say as I do? for can you suppose she would doom the son of my bosom, and the child who has cost her so dear, to misery? Surely not; my Agnes had a soul superior—she would have stepped over such narrow bounds, joined their hands, and, for their happiness, have been regardless of the finger of Calumny, if any such could point at so gentle, and, I will add, so innocent a victim."

"First of women!" exclaimed William, "how truly might I say, thy counsels ever bettered my opinion! The disgrace would indeed fall where it is most due—on my unhappy brother, whom, in all probability, it would never

reach:

reach: but what say our parents? their advice shall determine us."

"My brother Bernard's opinion shall be mine," replied Godwin. "As the most injured person, he shall decide."

"Well then," said Bernard, "I coincide with Fanny; for what could give us more pleasure than joining the hands of that good boy and dear girl? I am sure it would leave me nothing to wish for on earth; and could my poor lost child rise from her grave, I am convinced she would applaud it."

"And for me," added Godwin, "I truly confess I know no event that could confer equal satisfaction on me as that of seeing the child of our dear and lamented Agnes united for life to our worthy Reuben. Notwithstanding all the precautions we have taken, I have frequently dreaded lest some unforeseen accident should discover her birth to her unworthy father, if he yet survives, and that he should claim her from us. By this

this step she would be secure for life, and safe in the bosom of Truth and Affection: but, my children, the concurrence of Mrs. Palmer is also necessary, and should guide us all; she has in our calamities been a true friend, and Anna is peculiarly hers."

"Nor would I advance a single step without her advice," replied William. "On her return we will resume the business, and endeavour to discover whether Anna's affections are in unison with Reuben's; if they are, with our good friend's approbation, we will then bid defiance to all but their happiness."

Reuben and Edward at that moment entering, the conversation gave way to more general subjects.

The day following was the return of the post. William had his eyes on his son, who could not settle to any business, but ten times in each hour walked

to

to the gate, listening to every noise. At length the sound of the horn struck his ear; and, with the speed of lightning, he rushed to meet the welcome postman, who presented a letter, directed in an unknown hand to his father. An unusual trepidation seized his whole frame; for a moment his heart ceased to beat; but the next its motion returned with redoubled violence. Hastening to his father, he presented the letter in silence, fixing his eyes on his face, as though he would read the contents there; but though these were not discernible, the effect they produced plainly evinced something more than common; for the flush of health gave place to a sudden paleness, an unusual gravity at the same time overspreading his whole countenance. "For Heaven's sake, my dear father," exclaimed Reuben, "speak! Pardon my impatience—you have surely received some disastrous news. Say, what of Anna? I am sure it concerns her."

"Anna

"Anna is not in perfect health," replied William, with as much composure as he could assume. "Who will go to London, and bring her home with us?"

Reuben for a moment made no reply, but at length exclaimed—"Oh, my beloved Anna, my heart sunk at thy departure, and too truly foreboded that I should never see thee more!"

"It would better become us as men, Reuben," replied his father, "to consider how we may soften this news to your mother and our aged parents, than give way to anguish that merely interests ourselves; but prepare—we will depart this night, for the manner of the intelligence yet more alarms me than her sickness."

He then gave his son the letter, whose anxiety was redoubled by the perusal. While he was expressing his surprise at the contents, Edward entered, and was immediately informed of the intelligence

his

his father had received. Anna's situation, he lamented, was truly fraternal affection: he, however, had no sooner looked at the letter, than a loud exclamation escaped him—"It is—it is Miss Fitzmorris's hand!" said he. "The gentle Editha is alarmed for our sister, and this information comes from her."

"From what reason should you suppose so?" replied William. "How is it possible you should be able to ascertain the young lady's hand?"

"Nothing more easy," replied he, producing his pocketbook, and drawing forth a letter. "See, there is what she wrote concerning the slaves; compare them—you will find the characters agree."

William did so, and was entirely of his son's opinion; then informing him of their intended journey, was putting up both letters—"You—you have not returned my letter, father," hesitated Edward, "and may perhaps lose it out of your pocket."

William,

William, thus reminded, gave it back to his son, whose face at the moment was covered with a burning crimson. "And may not I also accompany you, my dear father?" said he. "My heart is anxious for my sister, and I may be of some service."

"You will be most so, my son, by using every means in your power, during my absence, to support the spirits of our aged parents and your dear mother, to whom I am going to disclose this disagreeable business; I shall then depart without delay."

Edward made no answer but by a deep sigh, and immediately followed his father to join the family.

The intelligence, though communicated with every caution that tenderness could suggest, fell heavy on all. Even Fanny's usual presence of mind forsook her,

her, and she lamented with anguish the situation of Anna.

"Oh, fly, my beloved husband!" cried she; "fly to the darling of my heart! Oh, gracious Heaven! spare all that is left me of my dear——restore her to my maternal arms—or never, never will my soul know peace! Where, at this disastrous moment, is our best friend? where is Mrs. Palmer?"

"By this time she is doubtless with her," replied William. "Cheer, my love, or indeed I cannot leave you. The next post will, I trust, bring you good news."

Every thing being ready, William and his son soon after departed, on their own horses for the first stage, and on hired ones the remainder of the journey.

CHAPTER VI.

THOUGH the letter which Editha had written to William Godwin had reached him, yet that designed for Mrs. Palmer had failed, as it was addressed to her at Bath, and that lady was removed to Bristol—her father being disgusted with the former place after a week's residence, had insisted on repairing to the latter; which he reached in so weak and exhausted a state, as to make it apprehended that he would have expired on the road.

On his arrival he found himself so much worse, that, unwilling as he was to acknowledge it, he declared it was fruitless to attempt any longer to fly from death; and accordingly began to bustle about the mighty work of repent-

ance,

ance, being determined to rub out the accumulating sins of fourscore and seven years between the rising and going down of the sun; for he survived but little more than that time after his arrival!

Mrs. Palmer left no duty unperformed while he was living, nor yet after his decease; for finding by his will that he desired she would see him laid in the vault of his ancestors, she determined to obey him. To his wife he had left five hundred pounds a-year, and the bulk of his fortune to his daughter; to whom this acquisition was, until lately, totally unexpected.

The second day after his death, Mrs. Palmer had written to Anna, signifying the event that had taken place; also her intention of accompanying the body to Derbyshire, desiring her not to write, as she should have left Bristol; and that immediately after the funeral, she would return

return to town post; expressed the sorrow she felt at Mrs. Fitzmorris's illness (Anna's letter respecting her having reached Mrs. Palmer the day before she left Bath); declared her obligations to Mr. Fitzmorris, hoping that gentleman would permit his daughter to accompany them the ensuing summer; desired her not to inform her parents of Mrs. Fitzmorris's illness, as it would give them unnecessary uneasiness; and, finally, she concluded the whole by saying, she expected to embrace her in a fortnight at farthest.

This letter reached Anna, but not until after it had been perused by Fitzmorris, who had the satisfaction to find, that, in all probability, the lady was safe for a fortnight; during which time, if he determined to give up Anna, her health would be entirely re-established; or if, on the contrary, he adopted other

measures,

measures, he would have time to execute any thing he might resolve on.

This letter arrived on the sixth day after Editha's removal, and when Anna was sufficiently recovered to leave her bed.

Previous to this event, Fitzmorris had not intruded his presence on Anna; but now secure of Mrs. Palmer, and apprised that her health was almost restored, his usual spirits returned, and he determined to lose no time, but to press his suit with all the earnestness he was master of, and accordingly sent his compliments, and entreated the favour of personally inquiring after her health. Anna, who felt a repugnance she accused herself with for Fitzmorris, returned to this message an obliging answer, determined, as her health was so much restored, to entreat she might be permitted

to

to go to Editha, whom she longed to question respecting her writing to her parents; and Mrs. Palmer, as she could not conceive why it had been done privately, truly surmising, by the removal of the last-mentioned, that the letter to her had failed.

On Fitzmorris's entrance, he was struck with the alteration his diabolical arts had made in her beautiful face; but, nevertheless, complimented her on her recovery, expressing the alarm it at first had occasioned him, when he rushed, without ceremony, into her apartment, and asking, with well-dissembled curiosity, if this was a first attack, or whether she was subject to fits?

"Never," replied Anna; "and I trust I never shall again. The wine I drank at supper was particularly disagreeable to me; and to that I attribute my illness."

Fitzmorris, vexed to find that she still

persevered in the real cause, endeavoured all he could to divert that opinion, which Anna's timidity did not suffer her to persist in; but turning the discourse to Editha and her aunt, desired to be informed respecting the health of the latter, and whether she might not now be permitted to see her friend.

"My sister's health is still very precarious," replied Fitzmorris; "and for my daughter, in a few days I shall be happy to present her to you, for then all danger will be over."

Anna sighed.—"I thought, sir," replied she, with great gentleness, "that fits were never communicative."

"But, my dear Miss Palmer, yours were accompanied by a degree of fever that rendered them alarming. I fear you received some infection from my sister, previous to your coming hither: but why does that melancholy overspread your lovely face? Is Editha the only one in the family for whom you have

the

the least esteem? Command here; you are mistress, and myself the most devoted of your servants."

Such a speech from the gloomy harsh Fitzmorris at once surprised and overpowered Anna with confusion.—"I should be very ungrateful, sir," replied she, "not to respect the whole family, to whom I have been so highly obliged."

"Respect, charming Anna, is too cold a return for the affection my heart acknowledges for you; so gentle a mind cannot surely be cruel enough to doom me to despair, when I lay myself and fortune at your feet."

"Good Heaven! sir, you shock me. Editha's father! Indeed you distress me beyond measure!"

"How so?" replied Fitzmorris—"Is my affection then so dreadful, and is Editha to monopolize all your love?"—As he spoke, he attempted to take her hand; but Anna shrunk back, and appeared ready to faint.

 "Nay,"

" Nay," said he, " why that averted look? Say, lovely girl, will you give me leave to apply to Mrs Palmer? I flatter myself my fortune——"

" Will have no effect on her," replied Anna, recovering her confusion. " She loves me too well not to leave me, in a cause of so much consequence, to my own choice, and that is never to quit her: I have therefore only to entreat, that while I intrude on your hospitality, you will cease a conversation that gives me so much pain."

" By Heaven, it is impossible!" exclaimed he, attempting to embrace her: " I must be more or less than man not to resolve to conquer this soft timidity—this childish declaration."

Anna screamed aloud, and in a moment Julia rushed into the room—' What be de matter?" cried she; " you fright away my sense! sure you not drink wine again!"

" Be gone," exclaimed Fitzmorris; " Why

"Why this insolent intrusion? You were not called."

"Me was," replied Julia. "Young Missey no scream widout want me. Julia know duty, and more from love den fear."

"I charge you stay," said Anna; "I have business for you."

"I then may take my leave," rejoined Fitzmorris, malignantly. "You will consider of what I have said; and I trust will answer me more kindly in the evening."

Anna made no reply, and Fitzmorris immediately after withdrew.—"What shall we do, Julia?" cried she; "that odious man has frightened me to death. Oh that I had never entered his house! Mrs. Palmer, from her removal, I fear, has never received Editha's letter."

"But de oder, Missey.—Friends get dat, no doubt—soon be here," replied Julia.

"That thought alone, Julia, enables me to keep up my spirits; for the bare

idea of passing a fortnight here would kill me. But have you heard where Editha is placed?"

"No, I ask footman, for more servants be come now, Missey; but no tell me, only laugh in my face."

"I will go," said Anna: "I can hire a postchaise to take us home; there is less danger on the high road than under the roof of this odious man."

Julia advised her against this step, as by that means she would probably miss of her friends, whom she might soon expect, adding—"No fear dat little time, Missey; me take care me warrant—beside me tink massa no let us go."

"Not let me go, Julia!" repeated Anna; "you astonish me; he will not surely dare to detain me!"

"Dare!" repeated Julia. "Ah, Missey, you no know what he dare—he fear noting."

Anna shuddered at this account, but

nevertheless

nevertheless determined to mention her intention when next he should visit her.

Fitzmorris retired to dress in the mean time, and to his trusty confidant declared what had passed, vowing that Anna should not escape him; for he was determined, if all other means failed, to carry her out of the kingdom, and secrete her until she consented to his terms; adding, that the death of old Sommerton (whom he supposed her grandfather) would make a fine addition to her fortune, and concluded with saying—"Between ourselves, such a recruit may not prove amiss, for I have lost considerably since I came to England; had the old woman died, her ten thousand indeed might have made up the deficiency; but I have scarcely any hopes of that now, for she is much better."

Fitzmorris, to his great vexation, was prevented repeating his persecution to

Anna that day, by the unwelcome visit of three of his London companions, who, knowing he had a house on the Heath, called to take a dinner, and sat drinking with him until the night was far advanced, leaving him in a state of almost brutal intoxication; in which situation, taking up a candle, he declared he would go to Anna's apartment; but his trusty valet, who saw he was in no situation to recommend himself to a lady, prevented him, by assuring him she had long since retired to rest, and soon after persuaded him to do the same. While Fitzmorris and his domestics had been employed in the entertainments of the guests, Anna had written to Inglewood, without, however, mentioning the extent of her uneasiness, but entreating to be fetched home without delay, Julia conveying the letter to the postman, as she had done those of Editha.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

FITZMORRIS rose earlier than usual, his head aching from the last night's debauch—his blood fevered with what he called love—and his conscience agonized with all the torment that vice gave rise to.

In order to reduce his spirits to some degree of calmness, he walked into his garden, and was apparently lost in thought; when Anna, leaning on Julia, crossed the path before him, and for a time banished his unpleasant reverie.— "Abroad so early!" said he; "I am fortunate this morning!" at the same time offering to place her arm under his. "May I flatter myself you will breakfast with me?"

 "I came

"I came merely to try my strength, sir," returned Anna, withdrawing her hand, "as I propose going to town to see Mrs. Fitzmorris to-day."

"You jest surely!" answered he; "you cannot think of putting your health to so dangerous a hazard, or that I am so little sensible of the value of my charge as to permit so improper a step!"

"I was intrusted, sir," replied Anna, "to Mrs. Fitzmorris's care; I am not afraid of fevers; and as Miss Editha is not here——"

"I will, on my honour, fetch her in two days," interrupted he; "but favour me, charming Anna, by dismissing your servant; I have something to communicate which requires your private ear."

"I hear no subject, sir," replied Anna, "that needs concealment; and, for myself, would only entreat that you will permit one of your domestics to fetch me a chaise from Hounslow."

"And will you favour me with no

answer

answer to what I requested yesterday," said he angrily, "since I must speak before this black devil?"

"You call devil black, massa?" interrupted Julia. "Negro call devil white: me believe no colour, only bad heart make devil—wicked conscience hell."

"D——n you," exclaimed Fitzmorris, losing his temper; "I merit this for permitting you to torment me after what passed in Jamaica."

"Ah! much pass dere, massa; if you forget, your memory no so good as Julia's."

Fitzmorris raised his hand, and was only prevented from striking her by the presence of Anna. "I see," said he, "I have nothing to expect, and shall act accordingly; yet must inform you, madam, that to Mrs. Palmer only will I resign you; she, perhaps, may be more sensible of my attention than you are."

With these words he turned away in

 a rage,

a rage, and soon regained the house, leaving Anna amazed at his brutality, and shocked to find herself in the power of so bad a man.

Fitzmorris saw Anna in the afternoon in her own apartment; he attempted, as before, to send away Julia, but in vain. Liberty had made her bold, and she now openly despised the tyrant whose frown had heretofore made her tremble.

From Anna he was convinced he had no favour to expect; he saw he was detested; and anger, as much as love, stimulated him to revenge the affront. He had been particularly favoured by the ladies, and was enraged to find her blind to those attractions that had subdued so many, never considering that her heart might be pre-engaged, or that he was no longer so young, or possessed of so attractive a person as formerly; though, to confess the truth, his dissi-

pated

pated life, more than age, had caused the alteration.

"I have no time to lose," said he to his colleague in vice; "and it is but labour lost to try gentle means; force and fear can alone conquer so obstinate a spirit; she shall find I am not to be trifled with. 'Sdeath, have I lived until now to be vanquished by a girl? beside, should I let her escape, she would but relate what has passed, and make me ridiculous. By Heaven, I will bear her to France, and there, wife or mistress, her choice shall determine. I have nothing to fear in this case but the tongue of her mother; and that, until I can make all secure, I will keep at a distance. She has no heroic brothers; but if she had, I care not; my arm never yet failed me, nor do I fear it now."

"I must confess," replied the valet, "I am not quite so sanguine in this business, as I have been in some where I have had the honour to serve you. Mrs. Palmer

Palmer is rich, and will doubtless spare no pains or expence to discover her daughter."

"True, nor no expence to heal her reputation; for who will believe she was not consenting to the elopement? Besides, the young vixen will very soon be glad to salve so desperate a case with the old remedy, matrimony: but enough of this; prepare me posthorses to-morrow night by nine o'clock; I shall settle all my business in the day. You must ride forward and obtain relays, and give out, in case of question, that I am conveying an impudent daughter to France. We shall reach Dover early in the morning, and will go directly on shipboard, to prevent all alarm."

"But what, sir, do you mean to do with Julia?"

"D——n her, if it was not for her infernal yells on the road, I would take her too, if it was only for the pleasure of pushing her overboard into the sea.

As

As it is, we will lock her up, and leave her under the charge of your sister, whom you must command, as she values her place, not to release her until the next day."

"But Miss Editha, sir, and your son?"

"Pish, if my sister gets well, the girl will naturally return to her; and I may make a merit hereafter of sending for her abroad. As for the boy, he cannot be better than at school; therefore, no more questions, but prepare to obey me."

"After so many proofs of my attachment, sir," replied the man, "I shall not now forfeit your friendship."

"After so many proofs of my gratitude, I hope you will not," answered the master.

With these words the *worthy* pair separated for the night.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

In the morning all was preparation for the intended expedition. Fitzmorris wrote to his sister, who was yet in a very precarious state of health, that immediate business demanded his presence in a distant part of the kingdom; and entreated that, when it should be convenient, she would again take the care of Editha. To his son's preceptor he likewise sent, signifying his intention that he should remain at school until they heard farther from him. He also settled his domestic economy for the country with his housekeeper, who was the valet's sister, and remitted an order to his attorney to discharge his house in town, together with his domestics. Thus all

all was prepared, and Fitzmorris looked on his success as certain.

Julia, whose eyes and ears were attentive to all that passed, was not unmindful of the more than usual business that seemed in agitation; but which, perhaps, had made no material impression, had she not heard the valet and housekeeper in close conversation; the former with a bitter imprecation cursing the new folly that actuated his master, declaring it was the last he would be engaged in, concluding with saying— "The pitcher goes often to the well, but at last comes home broken. Never had man such devilish warnings and hair-breadth escapes, but it is all in vain; they only, I think, make him more daring; and for this attempt on Miss Palmer——"

His eye at that instant met the figure of Julia, who was standing in the door-way;

way; but uncertain whether she had heard, and concluding that if she had, she could make nothing of it, he turned the discourse to common occurrences until her departure.

Julia had but just related to Anna what she had heard, when Fitzmorris sent his compliments, and desired to be admitted. It was now afternoon, and he had been endeavouring to drown thought in wine; he therefore behaved with less caution than formerly, urging his suit with much vehemence, until at length seeing the trembling Anna terrified, and almost ready to faint, he desisted, and left her alone with Julia.

"Oh, my God, protect me!" cried Anna; "what can I do? Surely, if you love me, you will not deny my request. The attempt you heard them mention, and his behaviour, all conspire to shew I have no time to lose; let us then this

very

very night privately leave the house; I am strong, and can walk a great way; neither am without money; Heaven will, I am sure, protect us, and we shall reach home in safety."

"Wid all my heart," replied Julia. "Ah! me hope some friend come before now."

"It is impossible they could reach here, had they even come post, before to-morrow or the next day! and oh! Julia, what may not happen in that interval! No, I will brave the worst, sooner than remain longer under this hated roof."

They then determined, as soon as the house should be settled for the night, to endeavour to escape, and reach Hounslow on foot.—"From whence," said Anna, "we will, my faithful Julia, procure a chaise, and travel all the way post; by morning we shall be safe from pursuit, should we even be followed;

but

but that I think improbable, as Fitzmorris will be uncertain of our route."

This resolution supported the spirits of Anna during the evening; in the course of which Julia made up a little bundle of necessary apparel, which she proposed to take with them.

At length the clock struck nine, and an instant after a chaise drove into the court. Anna scarcely breathed, though she thought it impossible it should bring any one from Inglewood; but all her hopes vanished, when, a moment after, Fitzmorris desired to be admitted.—" I am sorry, charming Anna," said he, " to be the messenger of bad tidings; but Mrs. Palmer is taken ill at Derby, and has sent to require your immediate attendance."

" Preserve her, merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Anna: " I will fly to her; the fatigue

fatigue she has undergone has killed her, and I shall be deprived of my dearest friend."

"I received the intelligence near an hour since," returned Fitzmorris, "but could not assume courage to declare it to you: I, however, immediately ordered a chaise for your conveyance, and, with your permission, will accompany and deliver you safe to her."

"Julia will be sufficient," replied she, recoiling at his offer; "I have no fear but for my beloved mamma."

"Excuse me, I will not trust you alone to the dangers of the night, for I presume you will depart immediately. Julia can follow in the morning by the stage. Come, you lose time—all is prepared," concluded he, presenting his hand.

Anna drew back, and paused for a moment, while Julia replied—"No leave Missey; me run after coach sooner den be leave here behind."

"Has

"Has my dear mamma sent no letter, nor yet her servant to accompany me," demanded Anna, fixing her soft but inquiring eyes on Fitzmorris.

"No," replied he; "a horseman brought the message, and departed immediately for London."

"It is strange!" answered Anna, pausing; "I should have thought that—— but come, Julia, we will go; and I can but thank Mr. Fitzmorris for all his kindness."

"On my life," interrupted he, impatiently, "you shall not go unprotected."

"Heaven will protect me," replied Anna, raising her eyes. "No action of my past life has, I trust, made me forfeit that blessing."

"Doubtless not," answered Fitzmorris, with a sneer; "but in this case it delegates its power to me. Come—come— on my *honour* I will guide you in safety."

"Slender barrier!" said Anna, aside. The discourse which Julia had over-

heard

heard recurring fresh to her memory; then turning to Fitzmorris, with as much firmness as she could assume, she added—"Pardon me, sir, for declining your offer; but, indeed, I will not go without Julia."

"By my soul, but you shall," returned he, losing his patience, and stamping with rage; "I wished to woo you to love and happiness, but will not be trifled with; and therefore now throw off the mask, and boldly tell you that I am determined; all resistance is vain; you must, and shall accompany me."

"Oh God, protect me!" cried Anna, trembling; "then, perhaps, my dear—dear friend is not ill."

"I neither know nor care," exclaimed he, rudely seizing her hand; "she is an old woman, and fit only for worms meat, while you, glowing with youth and beauty——"

"Unhand me, monster!" screamed Anna, at the same time releasing herself

and

and flying to Julia, who clenched her fists, and grinning horribly, placed herself before her, bearing no indifferent resemblance of a fury defending an angel.

"No, go widout like," sputtered Julia, almost inarticulate with passion; "bad white man—wicked Christian—me die before let take away Missey."

"Die then, and be d——d!" exclaimed he, at the same time with unmanly brutality striking her over the face (which was instantly covered with blood) with such force as caused her to recoil several paces, and but for the timely succour of Anna, she must have fallen to the ground.

"Monster! villain!" screamed Anna, rending the air with her cries: "Murder us together, for we will never separate."

"I have business for *you* living," replied he, tauntingly; "resistance is useless."—With these words, like a fell kite seizing a dove, he snatched up his prey,

and

and in spite of her cries and resistance, bore her down the flight of stairs into the hall, covered as she was with the blood of Julia, who, from the blow, lay senseless on the ground.

"For Heaven's sake, sir," exclaimed the valet who was waiting in the hall, "cover her with a cloak; it will not delay a moment. See, she has fainted." And, indeed, Anna, exhausted with the exertion she had made, had suddenly become inanimate, and now lay motionless in Fitzmorris's arms.

The door of the hall had been opened in readiness, as Fitzmorris descended the staircase. At that instant William Godwin and Reuben arrived, and rushed in, having heard the screams as they alighted from their horses at the gate, there being no one to oppose their passage, the postillion alone being on the outside. The first object that presented was Anna covered with blood, and ap-

parently dead, in Fitzmorris's arms. Reuben, his eyes sparkling with rage, flew to him, and in a moment, with the vigorous arm of undebauched youth, snatched, in spite of resistance, the senseless Anna from his grasp, while his father seconded his efforts by knocking down the valet, and seizing another villain, who came to the assistance of their infamous master.

Fitzmorris, whose fury knew no bounds, finding himself deprived of Anna, hastily drew a pistol from his pocket, and levelled it at William. At that instant their eyes met—they became fixed as statues, the guilty Fitzmorris recoiling a few steps, and dropping the pistol from his enervated hand.

"Is it possible," at length exclaimed William, "that my eyes do not deceive me? Doth the earth yet shudder with thy impious weight? Degenerate monster!

ster! guilty of every crime that disgraces human nature! the death of thy own daughter was alone wanting to complete the number! Oh, murdered child of sweet Agnes! I here devote myself to revenge; the ties of blood I tear from my heart, and even here on earth shall thy detested father pay the dues of offended justice."

Daring as Fitzmorris, or rather Edwin, was in vice, he appeared petrified with horror, rolling his haggard eyes around, and gnashing his teeth with anguish.

"She is not dead, my father!—she breathes, and will yet live to bless us," exclaimed Reuben in a transport.

"For that, Heaven be praised! But say," demanded William, turning indignantly towards his brother, "what does this mean? You cannot surely have been so abandoned of God as to have injured this innocent!"

"*She* at least has not been abandoned of God," replied Edwin; "her person is as uncontaminated as it is beautiful. But speak, for I have but little time to lose: did not you say she was the child of Agnes?"

"I did," returned William. "In the horror of the moment prudence was lost, and I now will conceal the truth no longer; she is your own daughter: but build not upon that, for no human power shall snatch her from my protection; therefore attempt it not—I warn you it will be in vain. As soon as she recovers we will be gone. You have my pity, and Heaven forgive you! Oh! will no warning move that obdurate heart? Surely the meeting with Emma would have deterred any other but yourself from vice for ever, and made them penitent as she was."

"Well—well—well—you know that too; but enough. Answer me a few questions, and I will swear never to attempt

tempt removing the child of my Agnes from you."

"I ask no oath," replied William; "but propose your questions, Anna recovers, and I am in haste."

"And so am I," returned Edwin, frantically. "If Anna is the child of Agnes, whose infant did I see dead on her bosom?"

"Mine," answered his brother, "an unhappy innocent, who even in the womb fell a sacrifice to your offences by the anguish they caused its mother."

"Enough!" cried he, striking his forehead. "One more question, and then farewell for ever—Who is Mrs. Palmer? Oh! that subterfuge destroyed me!"

"The present owner of the estate upon the Forest, and a more than parent to Anna, whom she received from her dying mother."

"The mystery of the ring is then explained," said Edwin, without regarding

his brother. "No warning could, indeed, awaken me!" Then turning towards Anna, who was almost recovered, but in silent terror clasping Reuben's neck, he viewed her with attention for some minutes; then, with a look of despair, rushed out of the room.

William now caught Anna to his bosom, speaking comfort, and tenderly inquiring if she was able to accompany them, for that he was determined to be gone as speedily as possible.

"Oh, let us hasten," at length said Anna; "but where is my poor Julia? this blood is hers, and was spilled in my defence."

William then asked where she had left her; and being informed, without further question, ascended the staircase, and found Julia recovered from insensibility,

sibility, but so much hurt, that she could not leave the apartment without his assistance.

Having led her to Anna, and bound up her head, they were about to depart in the chaise, which had been prepared for other purposes, when the report of a pistol alarmed them. William, prepossessed with the horrid truth, left Anna and Julia with Reuben, and rushed forward into the house to demand the cause, which was soon discovered; for on the floor of the parlour lay extended, in the agonies of death, the guilty Edwin, who had placed a pistol to his ear, and thus, uncalled, rushed, with all his vices on his guilty head, into the presence of an offended Creator!

Life, however, had not quite forsaken him; he fixed his eyes on his brother, and, after various efforts to speak, all of which were unavailing, pointed to the

 table;

table; then grasping the hand of William, who had forgotten the vices of the man in the situation of the brother, with an agonizing pang expired!

Depraved as Edwin had been for years, William was shocked at his death, particularly as it precluded all repentance, and appeared a complete seal to his numerous offences. For some time he remained in speechless anguish, bending over the disfigured body. At length he recollected Edwin's pointing to the table, and on approaching it, found a paper, wherein was written—

"I appoint my daughter Anna Godwin, my son William Fitzmorris, and his sister Editha, joint heirs and inheritors of all I die possessed of; and I leave them in the care, and under the sole guardianship, of William Godwin, whom I once called brother.

"EDWIN GODWIN FITZMORRIS."

This

This had apparently been written but a few moments previous to the rash act, and plainly evinced, that however destitute he was of virtue himself, he revered it in his brother, by wishing him to take charge of his children.

Oppressed with the scene before him, together with the fatigue of a long journey, performed with scarcely an interval of rest, William for some time was almost overpowered with the shock; but, struggling with his feelings, he at length turned to the domestics, who stood around in stupid amazement, and gave the necessary orders, which they immediately shewed a disposition to obey, as the valet, who, as may be surmised, was no other than Harris, informed them he was their late master's brother.

William returned to the hall, desiring

Reuben and Anna to depart immediately to an inn at Hounslow, where he would join them in half an hour. Reuben, notwithstanding the situation of Anna, had heard part of the discourse that passed between his father and Fitzmorris, and by that had learned he was no other than his uncle Edwin, and to his utter amazement, the father of Anna; and now readily surmised the fatal event which had taken place. As for Anna, her alarm and fainting had rendered her insensible to every thing, until Fitzmorris rushed out of the hall; she now would fain have questioned Godwin respecting the cause of the fresh confusion, but he only replied by giving her in charge to Reuben, who placed her with Julia in the chaise, and accompanied them to Hounslow: Reuben, however, previous to his entering the vehicle, stepping back to his father, said—"When I have seen Anna in safety, may I not return?

return? My heart recoils at leaving you even for a moment, in such distress as your features too legibly display."

"No, my son," replied William; "I will soon join you. Alas! the unhappy man is dead by his own hand; and, though nature abhors the deed, as well as many other of his actions, yet he was my brother."

William now re-entered the house, and calling for Fitzmorris's confidential servant, demanded where the children of his unhappy brother were placed? To which Harris replied, that the boy was at Winchester, and Editha at a school not more than two miles from Hounslow. William then ordered the domestics to attend him, and walking through the house, he placed his seal on the escrutoires in behalf of the children, and soon after left the house for the night.

Reuben, in the mean time, with his charge, had reached an inn at Hounslow, where Anna began to look around her without fear, anxious only for the return of him whom she called her father, and whose conduct truly entitled him to that appellation. At length Godwin entered, and Anna flew to embrace him, inquiring what had detained him—at whom the pistol had been fired—and, finally, what uneasiness oppressed him?

"Ask me no questions to-night, my love," answered Godwin; "to-morrow I have much to disclose to you; but at present let us retire to rest—the events of the day have nearly overcome me."

They soon after withdrew; and Godwin's horror for his brother's death was for some hours lost in sleep, the extremity of fatigue mastering every other sensation.

In the morning all met with recruited spirits;

spirits; Godwin only was depressed and unhappy, and being with Reuben and Anna alone, after breakfast, addressed the latter thus—"My dear Anna, a number of unhappy circumstances that preceded, and likewise followed your birth, rendered it necessary that I should adopt and pass you to the world as my child; and I can truly say I have loved you as such: but, my Anna, the deception, for many reasons, must now cease, but not my affection—that must remain strong as ever, beyond the power of time or chance to alter."

"Am I not then your daughter?" cried Anna, turning pale and trembling. "Oh! my dear father, do not disclaim your child."

"Disclaim thee!" repeated he, folding her in his arms. "Never—never—Anna—family reasons now require the secret to be divulged to the world; but for thyself, think me thy parent as thou didst before."

"Alas!"

"Alas!" said Anna, "if it must be so. But have I a father—a mother?—Ah! my heart will lead me to her!—It is—it must be Mrs. Palmer."

"Not so," returned Godwin; "your mother died soon after your birth; she was the beloved sister of my wife, and called Agnes; her loss you have often heard us deplore."

"But my father, is he too dead?"

"Alas! I tremble to name him, for I fear he has made thee suffer much; but remember, he knew thee not, and has paid his follies with his life; let therefore pity draw a veil over the errors of *thy* father and *my* brother."

"Good Heavens!" cried Anna, scarcely articulate; "surely I dream! you cannot mean Fitzmorris?"

"I do, indeed," answered Godwin. "By what means or for what reason he was called so, I know not, for we have been many years estranged; but some future time you shall know all."

"Oh!

"Oh! I know too much," cried Anna. "Heaven pardon me, I hated him! I called him names!—but—but—alas! that fatal pistol is explained! Did you not say he was dead too? Oh! I can never be forgiven!"

"You are indeed," returned Godwin; "for see the paper he has left; does he not mention you with his other children?"

"Oh! I want it not—I do not deserve it," said she, weeping; "let me still be your child. I have no wish for his wealth. But is my beloved Editha indeed my sister?"

"She is. I am now going to her," replied Godwin. "Reuben will remain here in my absence. I shall return to dinner."

Godwin then departed, leaving Anna and Reuben; the former of whom, lost in thought, remained for some time silent, until the latter taking her hand, and tenderly pressing it, said—"Oh! my Anna,

Anna, is it possible—and are you, indeed, not my sister?"

"Your father hath said so," answered Anna, weeping. "But, good Heaven, how dreadful! he is no longer *my* father! I have now lost all those ties so dear and necessary to my happiness, for you are not now my brother!"

"Happy thought!" exclaimed Reuben.

"Happy, Reuben!" repeated Anna. "And can you be so cruel as to say so—you whom I loved so dearly?"

"And do I not love you equally, Anna?" returned Reuben. "Heaven is my witness, that in your absence I have been the most miserable of mankind!"

"I will never leave Inglewood more," said Anna, "but endeavour to forget all the troubles I have suffered, and regard those disagreeable subjects as a painful dream; but Mr. Fitzmorris's death, for I cannot indeed call him father, will

will ever hang heavy on my spirits; yet I hope I was not the cause."

Reuben said all he could to comfort her, and they soon after visited Julia; she was much better, but the surgeon had ordered her to be kept quiet for a day or two.

Godwin rode directly to the house of his late brother, and gave Harris the necessary orders respecting the funeral, and other business, particularly inquiring after Mrs. Fitzmorris; and being told she was better, wrote a few lines to inform her of the melancholy event that had taken place.

"And now," said Godwin, coldly addressing Harris, "how long have you lived with my brother? and how came you so readily to know me?"

"I have been his servant near eighteen years," replied Harris; "and as for knowing

knowing you, sir, I had seen you some years back, and you are but little changed."

"I do not recollect it," answered William. "Mention the time and place."

"At your mother's funeral," replied Harris; "I brought a letter from my master."

"And gave it by mistake to my wife. Was it not so?" returned Godwin, a momentary flush of anger crossing his cheek.

"It was, sir, and I beg pardon; I but obeyed the commands of my master."

Godwin sighed—"And how," said he, "came my brother to be called Fitzmorris?"

"By his marriage, sir," replied Harris; "an act of parliament was obtained for that purpose; but, if you will permit me, I will relate all the material events that happened to him after his leaving England."

"Some

"Some time hence I will trouble you," replied Godwin; "at present you will more oblige me by executing those orders I have given."

Harris bowed, and William walked into the apartment where the remains of Edwin were deposited; he remained for some time alone; when he retired, his features plainly pourtraying how much he was affected, being swollen and inflamed with tears.

Previous to his visiting Editha, he returned to the inn, and finding Anna more calm, proposed she should accompany him in a postchaise, in which they soon reached the school where Editha was boarded. Godwin was at once struck with her appearance, while Anna, throwing her arms around her, in broken sentences, called her, her beloved, her dear, dear sister; Editha,

with

with the most lively affection, returning her caresses.

When they became composed, William astonished Editha by informing her he was her uncle—the relationship she held to Anna—and at length, in as gentle a manner as possible, that her father had died *suddenly;* hoping that in future she would regard him as an affectionate representative of the parent she had lost.

Harsh as Fitzmorris had ever been to his daughter, she bewailed him with unfeigned sorrow, though it was somewhat mitigated by the soothings of Anna, and the tenderness of her uncle.—"And shall I, indeed, live with Anna?" said she, raising her fine dark eyes sparkling through tears to his face—"and will you let me be one of your children? and may I be permitted to love as well as honour you?"

"You

"You shall, my Editha, my child," replied he, tenderly saluting her; "we will all love you."

"Ah! then you will spoil me, for, alas!" said she, "I have not been used to be loved, except by Anna here, and my poor brother."

"You deserve to be beloved by all the world," cried Anna; "at Inglewood every one will be sensible of your merit."

"And shall I accompany you thither?" said Editha; "but my poor aunt, she is not yet recovered, and I cannot leave her, for she has been very kind to me."

"We will," replied Godwin, "persuade her to visit Mrs. Palmer in the summer, for my habitation is merely a farm, and not fit for the reception of great ladies."

"Perhaps so," returned Editha; "but it will please me; for neither fine houses nor fine clothes have ever yet afforded me much satisfaction."

Godwin

Godwin and Anna soon after took leave of Editha, promising to see her the next day, and to take her into the country with them, if Mrs. Fitzmorris consented.

Godwin, on his return to the inn, wrote to his wife, informing her that Anna was perfectly recovered, and with him; but as Mrs. Palmer would be in town in the course of a few days, he did not think of returning until he had seen her.

" I will not," said he to Reuben and Anna, " shock your beloved mother with an account of the disasters that have happened, until we are on the spot to offer her comfort; nor will I, if possible, ever let our aged parents be informed of the real death of my unhappy brother; nature, at my father's age, could not bear so severe a blow: I shall simply therefore say that he died suddenly,

denly, and expect you both to be equally cautious, not only at home, but also to Editha and her brother, from whom, if possible, I mean to conceal the unhappy catastrophe."

CHAPTER IX.

On the following morning, Godwin and Reuben accompanied Anna to her sister's, where they left her for the day; Godwin having determined to go to London, and inquire respecting Mrs. Palmer, and also to make arrangements for the future with Mrs. Fitzmorris.

He found that lady somewhat recovered, but still very weak from her illness. She received Godwin and his son coldly, but expressed her concern at the death of her brother-in-law, and inquired particularly whether he had left any will?

"I have not, madam, found one," replied he; "for as yet I have been unable

able to make any search; but I should rather suppose he had not made any regular one, as this paper was on his table."

Godwin then presented it to Mrs. Fitzmorris, who considered it some time in silence. At length, said she, "I have frequently found your brother guilty of duplicity, but never suspected it could extend so far. In the first place, he passed himself on my father as the *only son* of a Scots gentleman, who had left him a fortune of ten thousand pounds. This sum he undoubtedly possessed; but his birth was a falsehood. He likewise, for I know not what reason, concealed his name, and married my sister by that of Edwin, which now appears to be only his baptismal one; the marriage I therefore conceive not valid, consequently the children must be illegitimate: now, though I should not be inclined to notice this, yet you may be

assured my sister will. She married without the consent of my father, who was never reconciled to her; and, having a large family, will hardly lose this opportunity of gaining her share of the property; you may therefore, sir, expect a lawsuit."

"Indeed I shall not," replied Godwin; "for I will readily, in behalf of the children, relinquish it, if not indubitably their right; nevertheless, if, on inquiry, I find justice on their side, I will defend them to the extent of all I possess. They are a legacy left me by an unhappy brother, and are welcome claimants both on my love and protection."

"May I ask, sir," said Mrs. Fitzmorris, "whether the ten thousand pounds your brother possessed was his paternal fortune?"

"It was not, madam," returned Godwin; "it was left him by his first wife: his paternal fortune would have been, simply, the reversion of a farm, much

integrity,

integrity, and unblemished honesty. Alas! had he never left us, he had possessed them."

"You do not sure mean to infer, that you are at this time a farmer, sir?"

"I am, indeed, madam."

Mrs. Fitzmorris paused for a moment, then said—"And pray who is this Anna Godwin, whom he has so liberally made a sharer in my sister's fortune?"

"His daughter, madam. Had she not the honour to be for some time under your protection?"

"You cannot surely mean Miss Palmer? The lady who introduced her to me is a woman of family and fortune, and would scorn such a deception."

Godwin explained how he surmised the mistake had arisen; and though Mrs. Fitzmorris, in the continuation of the discourse, behaved with increased coolness, still he preserved the equality of his temper; but finding his visit

neither likely to prove satisfactory to himself nor advantageous to his brother's children, he at length took leave, having signified that he should consult his friends on what she had advanced, and let her know the result after the funeral.

Godwin then called at the house that Mrs. Palmer had occupied in town, and left a letter for her, should she return; then with his son rode back to Hounslow, and leaving Reuben to take care of Anna, went on alone to the house of his brother on the Heath, as he wished to obtain what intelligence he could, that he might be able either to defend, in case of necessity, the claims of the children; or, if he found the business hopeless, to give it up without further trouble. Harris, he apprehended, was thoroughly acquainted with the whole; and therefore sending for him into a private apartment, he addressed him thus:—

"You

"You will oblige me by relating all you know respecting my brother from the time he left England; circumstances have arisen that render it necessary I should hear that which I would otherwise be excused from; nor will I be unmindful of the trouble I give you."

"Ah, sir," replied Harris, "before I begin, I must entreat you to summon all your fortitude; and also that you would remember, that though I have not behaved with the strictest rectitude, still I was only a servant, and acted under the influence, and by the commands of a master."

"Renounce your errors, and hereafter you shall not want encouragement to act uprightly," replied Godwin.

Harris bowed, and, after a pause, began his recital.

CHAPTER X.

"My master, sir," said Harris, "never, I believe, rightly recovered the death of the lady who died in childbed; for ever after that event he gave into a habit of drinking, and, I truly believe, rushed into every other species of dissipation, merely to stifle reflection.

"On his repurchasing into the army, the regiment was on the point of embarking for the West Indies; but a storm overtaking us as we left the Channel, we beat about some time, and at length, with much difficulty, made Jersey, where we staid to refit.

"In the same regiment was a Mr. Darleville, who some time before had fought with Mr. Whitmore; he knew my master perfectly well, and for some spite he bore him

him (I suspect on the account of Mrs. Whitmore) was continually endeavouring to degrade him to the rest of the officers, reflecting on his birth, or circumstances of the like nature. My master, pardon me, sir, had great pride, and resented this so heinously, that he challenged Darleville, who not only received a slight wound, but was also obliged to ask his pardon. This business, however, disgusted my master totally with the army, and before the regiment left Jersey, determined him to relinquish it altogether, which at length he did with some loss.

" Soon after the ship sailed, and a few days after we embarked for Southampton, where we had been but a short time when my master unluckily had a quarrel with a gentleman at the hazard-table; high words ensuing, they withdrew together, and in the heat of passion settled their difference by the sword, without seconds or witness.

"The consequence of this duel was the immediate death of my master's opponent, and he had no resource to avoid the hand of justice but flight; without loss of time therefore we set off for Portsmouth, where we arrived in a few hours. On inquiry we found a West India ship, bound to a different part from that where my master's late regiment was destined. As they only waited for a wind, my master immediately adopted the plan of going with them, taking his passage by the name of Thomas Edwin, esq. to prevent all suspicion.

"On board the same vessel were Mr. Fitzmorris and two daughters, who had been some time in England for the benefit of that gentleman's health; but were now returning to their estate, which lay some distance from Kingston in Jamaica. The elder of the ladies was Mrs. Fitzmorris, now living, and the other Miss Editha, afterwards my master's wife. To this family he passed himself as the

only son of a Scots gentleman lately dead; and added, that he proposed, provided he liked the West Indies, to purchase an estate there, as his fortune was too small to support him as he wished in Europe.

"Few men were more calculated to please than my master at that period; and not only Miss Editha, but her father also, was greatly taken with him; so that before the end of the voyage, the old gentleman, whose favourite daughter she was, had told him, that he would willingly give her to him, with fifteen thousand pounds, on their arrival.

"Mr. Fitzmorris was a man of strict morals, and would as soon have married his daughter to a robber as to a duellist; my master therefore did not dare reveal to him the real reason of his leaving England, nor yet his change of name, neither was it possible with his own safety, as the man was dead.

"One evening, being alone with him

in his cabin, after some previous discourse, he addressed me thus—' Harris, I have such an opinion of your fidelity, that I shall not scruple to declare my real designs: to confess truly, my heart never loved but once, nor can it ever more; but Miss Fitzmorris's fortune is too great an offer to be slighted; her person too is amiable, and I think I cannot do better than marry her, as such a connexion will at once increase my fortune, and give me respectability in the country. Mr. Fitzmorris has a large portion of family pride; should I therefore disclose my real origin, he would discard me in an instant; I will for that reason still retain the appellation he is acquainted with, which will be prudent, both on that account and in regard to my own safety. My own family, I am convinced, despise and hate me, and I am determined to endeavour to forget them. Mr. Fitzmorris too hinted the other day, that, as he had no son, he could

could wish his daughter's husband to assume his name, for which purpose an act of parliament could be easily obtained; that circumstance too will also assist in concealing me, for the name of Godwin would immediately tend to a discovery, whereas in that of Fitzmorris all will be forgotten.'

"On our arrival in Jamaica the marriage took place, and my master, for the first six months, kept so strict a guard on himself, that he stood highly in Mr. Fitzmorris's opinion. At that period the old gentleman died, and left ten thousand pounds to his eldest daughter, and the residue of the estate to your brother, provided that within the course of one year he assumed the name and arms of Fitzmorris; his other daughter he did not mention, as she had married some time before without his consent.

"This event was highly gratifying to my master, who immediately took the necessary steps. Mr. Fitzmorris's old

 agent

agent in London was employed, and the business effectually settled within the specified time.

"I will not scruple to say, that I believe he considered himself greatly in my power, for he behaved with more kindness to me than to any other of his domestics; and was likewise particularly generous to me. In short, sir, it was no wonder I was attached to him.

"Mrs. Fitzmorris, who was both a charming woman and possessed of an excellent temper, he never loved, though he always endeavoured, when sober, to behave with politeness to her; but any one might plainly see his conduct preyed on her spirits, and undermined her health. In ten months after the marriage, Miss Editha was born, and the year following a son, who was christened William, after his grandfather Fitzmorris; but even these events gave my master no apparent pleasure; his temper became daily more overbearing and insufferable

sufferable to his dependents, so that slaves only, who had no resource, would bear with it. In his fits of intoxication, his passions, however excited, knew no bounds; and in those moments he has even been known to correct the female slaves with his own hand, that perhaps the day before he had taken to his embraces! But you shudder, sir; shall I fetch you a glass of wine?"

"A glass of water," returned Godwin; "and afterwards, if you please, abridge your narrative as much as possible."

Harris, having presented the water, continued thus:—"My master had engaged, almost immediately after his father-in-law's death, a surgeon to attend the estate; this young man in time became his favourite companion, and I believe was the instigator of much of the mischief that was perpetrated; for, previous to living in Jamaica, he had been surgeon to a guinea trader, and held the life of a slave only at the exact price it would

would bring; the infirm and aged therefore experienced but little mercy from him; and I sincerely believe, that many on our estate perished from want of care, when they began to be past their labour. My mistress, however, I must say, to the extent of her power, assisted them when she knew of their sickness, or other calamities.

"When my master had been married about eleven years, a number of negroes were to be disposed of at an adjoining plantation. At the sale he purchased two, a mulatto boy and girl; the first about eighteen, the latter two years younger, and remarkably handsome, notwithstanding her complexion. She unhappily pleased my master, and I believe he spared no pains to seduce her, but in vain, as she became particularly attached to my mistress, which possibly might assist to render his attempts fruitless, though I am well aware that both promises and threats were employed.

"One

"One evening that I happened to carry some wine to my master and the surgeon in the parlour, I heard the latter say, 'You are too scrupulous: I will give you something to-morrow, which administered in a glass of wine or punch, will silence all objections. I heard no more, nor indeed did I think about it until two days after, when I was informed that the handsome mulatto was dying, and had declared to Julia that it was occasioned by something administered in punch! It then struck me that the discourse I had heard was relative to it; and in this supposition I was confirmed by the behaviour of my master, who during the day appeared peculiarly unhappy, or rather half frenzied; and, though doubtless every precaution was used, the girl at length died, though not before she had told Julia that your brother had taken advantage of the stupor in which she at first lay.

"Julia, who was a great favourite with

with my mistress, did not fail to inform her of this; and whether her health declined from that time, or from any natural cause, or that grief by degrees undermined her constitution, I know not; but she never, I believe, smiled afterwards; and in less than a year died apparently of a consumption; but I believe never complained to any one, not even to her sister, who lived on a small estate adjoining us.

"About six weeks previous to this event, as my master was returning home on horseback from a visit, on passing a small wood, he received a pistol-shot in his shoulder, and had doubtless fallen, as the fire was repeated, but for the fleetness of his horse: fortunately, however, he escaped with only one wound, which did not prove dangerous. At first we could not by any means surmise who was the author of this attempt; but we were not long in suspense, for the following evening the surgeon was mortally wounded,

wounded, in crossing a plantation, by the mulatto lad who was purchased with the girl, and was said to be her lover. Though the surgeon was senseless when first discovered, he survived some hours, and recovered sufficiently to disclose who had wounded him; but notwithstanding all possible search was made, it was without effect; the man was never taken, having doubtless either made away with himself, or escaped to the mountains and joined the rebellious negroes.

"These events all conspired to render Jamaica hateful to my master; and he talked of returning to Europe, and settling in France, as he might live there in safety: however, after much deliberation, he came to the resolution to send me first to England, to inquire into every thing that might concern his return thither; 'for,' said he, 'though I believe I am much altered, yet possibly not enough to prevent my being known by any of my former acquaintance; and then

then the subterfuge of my name and that accursed duel will be remembered. During my thirteen years residence here, I have never seen but one person that I was acquainted with in England; and he knew nothing of the rencontre at Southampton, nor that I had ever changed my name to any other than Fitzmorris; and that man, I was informed by the newspaper, lived but a short time after he reached England: I have therefore little to apprehend from him."

"Yet in all probability it was from him the agent heard it," said Godwin; "for he informed me, on my inquiry, that my brother was advantageously married; but he knew nothing farther."

"Well then,' resumed Harris, "my master continued, 'you shall go to England, make particular inquiry after the few people I was known to, especially Mrs. Whitmore and Darleville; for if either of those are in England I will not return; but if they should be either dead

dead or gone from thence, I shall not hesitate, as I had very few casual acquaintance, and should be scarcely recognized after such an absence, particularly under another name.'

"This resolution was not suffered to cool; I departed in the first vessel, and reached England in safety, where, on inquiry, I found Mrs. Whitmore had been dead two years; that Darleville had made interest, and was settled at Madras in a lucrative situation; and finally, what I knew would give my master great satisfaction, the man who kept the hazard-table at Southampton, and was the only witness of the quarrel, though not of the duel, was dead; so that I soon wrote back word that I believed he had nothing to fear, but might venture to return when he pleased.

"Soon after, he came to England, and determined to return to the West Indies no more; therefore put up the estate

and

and negroes for sale. You know the rest, sir; and I have only to add, that he now drank harder than ever, gave more way to passion, and seldom slept at home.

"From one of those nocturnal revels he returned one morning before break of day, in a state of absolute distraction, beating his head against the wainscot, and acting a thousand extravagances, the cause of which I could never truly learn; but he once hinted that he had by some chance met a relation."

Godwin sighed, and judged it to be Emma. "Enough," said he, "I have but one more question—Had we not come at that fortunate moment to Anna's rescue, where was she to have been conveyed? And say, has she suffered grosser insults than I was witness to?"

Harris hesitated; but a stern look from Godwin urged him to proceed—"My master, sir," resumed he, "meant to

carry

carry her to France; he was charmed with her at first sight, and would have married her."

"I had," replied Godwin, "this morning a few minutes conversation alone with the negro woman, whom you call Julia, and was inquiring of her respecting Anna's illness. She said something that at once arrested my attention, and almost petrified me with horror, when Anna opened the door, and she prudently dropped the discourse and I my questions; but her answers seemed to imply that my brother was the cause of her illness; say, was it so? you doubtless are acquainted."

Harris finding by this that all would doubtless be discovered, replied—"I call God to witness, that in this I at least was innocent, for my master had sent me that evening to London, with orders to stay until the morning, and bring back word of Mrs. Fitzmorris's health; nor did I know any thing of the business in agitation,

agitation, until his alarm at the danger of Miss Anna proclaimed it."

"I have not questioned her," replied Godwin; "because I would not shock her with the remembrance; but shall require the truth of Julia."

"Alas! sir, Miss Anna knows nothing, and Julia only from surmise; for she, as I have informed you, had attended the mulatto."

"Great God!" interrupted Godwin—"you surely cannot mean it. Edwin could not be such a——" villain he would have said; but the word died on his lips as he recollected the expiation.

"My master, undoubtedly," resumed Harris, "for he confessed it to me in his fright, had administered a dose of the same kind that he gave that unhappy girl; but a most miraculous circumstance prevented it being favourable to his wishes."

"Be quick," interrupted Godwin, "and relieve my suspense."

"My

" My master, when he thought she was asleep, entered the apartment, where he found her completely dressed; but on approaching to gaze on her, a sight instantly struck him, that at once removed all the ideas with which he entered the chamber; for on her hand, which lay crossed over her bosom, was the identical ring that he had made the pledge of his faith to his first love, and which he afterwards saw on her finger when in the coffin.

" This sight had so violent an effect, as he informed me, that he sunk into a chair by the bedside; the words of your sister-in-law, whenever she looked at the ring during her insanity, and which your old servant had informed him of, seemed to sound in his ears—I am Edwin's wife. He likewise told me, that in the frenzied anguish of the moment, he looked round, expecting to see her stand beside him.

" After he was a little recovered, he withdrew the ring from her hand, hoping to

to find he had mistaken; but the initials of his own name, that were engraven on the reverse, confirmed his terror and amazement; in addition to which, at that instant Miss Anna was seized with fits, her screams alarmed Julia, who immediately came to her, and remained during the night. I must confess, I persuaded my master that the ring had merely come into her possession by chance; and he, eager to quiet his own uneasiness, endeavoured to believe it was so; but I am convinced it caused him great alarm, as well as increased unhappiness."

Godwin now rose from his chair, and soon after withdrew, without visiting the apartment where his brother's body was deposited.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XI.



Godwin returned to the inn in a state of mind that shunned all observance, and retired for some hours to his chamber, before he could assume sufficient composure to join Anna and Reuben, the former of whom he could not look upon without execrating the villany which could plot the destruction of such innocence.

Two days after, at a very early hour, the remains of Edwin were privately interred in the nearest burial-place, and, to the great relief and satisfaction of all, the evening following brought their beloved Mrs. Palmer. In embraces, questions, and tears, the hours were passed until the night was far advanced, all at

 length

length retiring to rest, with minds much relieved by the soothing interference of true friendship.

On the morning following, Godwin drawing Mrs. Palmer aside, requested her opinion respecting his brother's children; at the same time acquainting her with all that had passed.

"My heart," said he, "prompts me to relinquish such ill-gotten wealth, even for them; but if you think it my duty to endeavour to defend it, I will do violence to my inclination and attempt it; but never shall Anna share money thus procured."

"My advice then, my good friend," replied she, "will, I fancy, be conformable to your wishes. A lawsuit would but reveal the actions of your unhappy brother, and perhaps be productive of no real advantage. Some way may be found," continued she, with a smile, "to recompence

recompence them for their loss, if they are virtuous; for you know not how rich I am become since we parted."

The entrance here of the waiter with a letter put a stop to the discourse; it was from Mrs. Fitzmorris, and contained these words:—

"SIR,

"Since I saw you I have heard from my sister, with whom, though I have had no communication for several years, yet I thought justice required I should inform her of the business in question; and the result is, that if you do not relinquish it, we shall jointly sue for the purchase-money received for the estate, and likewise what property your brother died possessed of, to make up the deficiency. As you were candid enough to mention your real circumstances when you called on me, I by no

means wish to encumber you with the expence that must naturally attend the care of William and Editha, who, though the children of my sister, I must hereafter blush to produce to the world as such. My sister and self shall not proceed until we have your answer.

"I remain, sir,
Your humble servant,
"L. FITZMORRIS."

Godwin presented the letter with a smile to Mrs. Palmer, who, having read it, answered—"Poor narrow-minded woman! I should sincerely pity the children, were they to be dependent on her. I have already given you my opinion; and while you reply to her letter, shall take Reuben and Anna with me to visit Editha."

Godwin being left alone, immediately answered Mrs. Fitzmorris's letter as follows:—

"MADAM,

"MADAM,

"Before the receipt of yours my determination was taken; I have neither time nor inclination for a law-suit, and trust I shall be able to provide for my brother's children without having recourse to such disagreeable means, though I am of opinion that justice would give a verdict in their favour, their right being obvious. But to have done with this subject, I could wish you to send some one, or be present yourself, at the opening of my brother's escrutoire, which I sealed up. His papers, of no value, I shall undoubtedly claim; but will give up every other property, there or elsewhere, to whom you shall appoint. Your offer respecting the children I must beg leave to decline; the expence of them I shall not feel; and, as you candidly own, you who are the sister of their unoffending mother, that you should blush hereafter to produce them to the world, what reception may they not expect from strangers?

gers? I, however, wish to spare both them and you such mortification, as my feelings are fortunately not so acute, nor my friends of that class, who will blame *them* for the errors of their unhappy father. I have nothing more to add, but to request you would let all business be settled between us as speedily as possible, as I shall send for my nephew from school immediately, intending to take him home with me.

"I am, madam,

Your humble servant,

"W. Godwin."

Mrs. Palmer, who soon after returned with Anna and Editha, whom she had taken from school, approved of the letter, which was sent off immediately.

On the day following, Mrs. Palmer went to London alone; and though she had not mentioned it to Godwin before her

her departure, called on Mrs. Fitzmorris. That lady received her with more coolness than usual, and appeared violently piqued at Godwin's reply to her letter.

"I came, madam," said Mrs. Palmer, "to thank you for your kindness to my Anna, and also to congratulate you on your recovery from so severe an indisposition."

Mrs. Fitzmorris bowed.—"I understood, madam," replied she, "that the young person you left with me was your daughter, or I cannot say I should so readily have accepted the charge."

"Indeed I am so accustomed to call Anna my child, and to treat her as such," said Mrs. Palmer, "that I do not wonder at your mistake; but I hope she has not disgraced your kindness?"

"She is, I understand," replied Mrs. Fitzmorris, haughtily, "a natural daughter to that man whom I was unfortunate enough for many years to call my brother,

and who had the assurance, as I suppose you know, not only to bequeath her a share of the fortune he had no right to, but also to leave my sister's children to the care of his brother, a farmer."

"I am indeed informed of it," replied Mrs. Palmer; "but you, I fancy, misconceive the real situation in life of Mr. Godwin, or you would not find him inferior to a planter; it is true he is a farmer, but his farm, which is considerable, is his own; and I can give you my word that his children will have very respectable fortunes.

"As for the father of Anna, I never saw him but twice, and that was here when I called for her; and as he *then* knew not her person, neither did he, when he wrote that paper, know her connexions and expectances, which I assure you are considerable enough to make her look down on any bequest he might leave her, and transfer it to her brother and sister."

This

This was spoken intentionally to punish Mrs. Fitzmorris's pride; it did so, and the lady became more condescending, promising to attend personally the day following at Hounslow, Mrs. Palmer replying that she would do herself the honour to accompany her to the Heath.

The following morning Mrs. Fitzmorris was true to her appointment, and with his attorney, Godwin and Mrs. Palmer went to the house that was late Edwin's. The escrutoire and drawers were opened in her presence, and securities found to the amount of thirty thousand pounds, all of which Mr. Godwin surrendered to Mrs. Fitzmorris, on receiving an acquittal from her and her sister; after which they separated good friends, Mrs. Fitzmorris proposing to see them in two days, their intention being to depart for Inglewood on the third.

On the morning before, Godwin had sent Reuben, accompanied by Mrs. Palmer's servant, to fetch his nephew William from Winchester; and with whom they arrived the second day after.

If Mrs. Palmer and Godwin were pleased with Editha, they were not less so with her brother, who was equally artless and affectionate, and as much flattered by being beloved. Reuben with tenderness had informed him of his father's death, though not of the means, before they began the journey; and though his grief had at first been bitter, yet the many claims that seemed to replace the loss of a parent, who had never treated him with kindness, soon calmed his affliction.

The following morning brought Mrs. Fitzmorris, who in reality appeared hurt to part with Editha. At the repeated entreaty of Mrs. Palmer, she at length condescended

condescended to promise to visit her the ensuing summer; and, at her departure, presented her nephew and niece with a fifty pound note each, for pocket-money.

Godwin then sent for Harris, and taking him apart, inquired how in future he meant to dispose of himself.

"I have wished, sir," replied Harris, "to retire to my own country, which is Somersetshire; and for that purpose have for some years been endeavouring to realize a sum sufficient to purchase an annuity for my life, that might enable me to live decently."

"And have you obtained the means?" demanded Godwin.

"I have about five hundred pounds," replied Harris; "but the purchase, I am told, will take another hundred."

"On my return home I will remit what will make up the deficiency," said Godwin; "and I hope the remainder of

life will make amends for the impropriety of the earlier part of it."

Harris expressed his thanks; then added—" Mrs. Fitzmorris, sir, ordered me this morning to bring my master's watch to you, and receive your orders concerning clothes."

" Give the watch to William," answered Godwin; " for the clothes, they are yours."

He then pulled the bell, and desired the waiter to send up his nephew; who obeying the command, Harris presented him with the watch, which the youth received with a moistened eye, and an expressive look at his uncle—then at Harris.

" If I understand that glance aright, William," said Godwin, " it requires this answer—Your intention is praiseworthy—act as your heart directs."

William

William wanted no second permission, but presented the note given him by Mrs. Fitzmorris to his father's servant. Harris having repeated his thanks, Godwin bade him adieu, and with his nephew joined his friends, who waited his presence to supper.

CHAPTER XII.



At five the next morning the party journeyed homeward, Mrs. Palmer, Anna, Editha, William, and Julia, in a post-coach, and Godwin and his son on horseback. On the fifth evening they arrived within sight of home; Godwin at once elated with the thoughts of embracing his family, and depressed how to break the death of Edwin to his father, for every occurrence was unknown to them, as he had only specified in his letter that Anna was with him and well, and that he only waited for Mrs. Palmer to return. The noise of the carriage announced them, and in a moment the whole family were at the gate. Pleasure for some time overcame the curiosity that the appearance of strangers would otherwise

otherwise have excited, Edward alone being acquainted with Editha, and flying to her with a rapture too great to suffer his welcome to be eloquent. A little recovered, they entered the house, where Godwin taking his nephew and niece by the hand, led them towards his father, saying, as they knelt to the venerable old man—"The blessings of Heaven, my beloved parent, multiply upon us! Receive those innocents—their claim upon you is great; they are the children of my brother."

The elder Godwin was for some time too much amazed to reply; at length bursting into a flood of tears, he threw his feeble arms around their necks, and blessed them.

William Godwin, fearing the surprise would be too much for him, desired the young people to withdraw for a few minutes—a command that was instantly obeyed,

obeyed, and he was left with his father, Bernard, Mrs. Palmer, and his wife.

"Oh speak, my son!" cried Godwin; "what means this? say—Have my prayers been heard? Is Edwin repentant, for you have doubtless seen him? Shall I be so blessed before I die?"

"Alas! my father," replied he, "Edwin is no more! His last request was my protection of his children."

"May his errors be obliterated, and may he rest in peace!" ejaculated Godwin—"But say, my son, have not these children a mother?"

William then, in as careful a manner as possible, informed his father of his brother's change of name, his marriage in Jamaica, and its subsequent consequences, suppressing every thing he possibly could that would give pain, and softening what he could not absolutely conceal; finally concluding by informing

ing him that Edwin's death was sudden, and almost immediately after their meeting.

"God forgive him!" replied Bernard, wiping off a tear that hung on his cheek; "I once loved him as my own son; and I dare say he was sorry after all. As sure as can be, it was the surprise of seeing William that overcame him, for I remember when I was young, and any thing gave me particular pleasure, I used to feel as if at once all the blood in my body rushed to my head and heart."

"The effects of surprise are frequently fatal," replied Mrs. Palmer.

Whether Godwin was of the same opinion is uncertain; but he made no observation respecting his son's death, but rather appeared to decline the subject; and, turning to William, said—"Thy family is increased, my son—I trust thy blessings will do the same."

"I doubt it not, my father," returned

he,

he, " if they admit of increase, which I think on earth is almost impossible."

The young people were now called in, and the venerable Godwin saluting them round, retired, saying—" I will leave you this night; to-morrow my spirits will be more composed: the ways of Providence are ever just; but the weakness of man doth not always submit with becoming resignation."

After some trivial refreshment, Mrs. Palmer proposed to go to her own house; but the whole party had so many questions to ask, and so much information to receive, that the night was far advanced before they separated, Editha accompanying Mrs. Palmer, and Anna attended by Julia.

William Godwin being left alone with Fanny, related to her the whole that had passed respecting his brother, and also his resigning the fortune that appertained

tained to the children—" A step," concluded he, " that I did not at first propose; but when I had heard Harris's account of my brother, I must confess I thought it at once just and prudent, as Edwin certainly became entitled to it by dishonourable means, which I would rather die than have laid open to the world. His children will, I trust, be of the same opinion; and we must endeavour, my love, to make up to them in affection what they have lost in fortune."

Fanny, who seldom had a separate opinion from her husband, immediately acquiesced, adding—" If I mistake not, Editha may some time hence become yet nearer related to us, for Edward has scarcely talked of any one else since your departure; and, however highly he has spoken of her, I cannot say I think he has flattered her, for she appears to merit all his encomiums."

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.

Though a cloud for some time appeared to hang over the spirits of the family at Inglewood, at length it began to disperse, and cheerfulness to resume its place among them. The sprightly good humour of Editha made her universally beloved; and the pains she took to amuse her grandfather, whenever she read a trait of melancholy on his face, even on a less susceptible heart, could not have failed of its effect. "Go along, Anna," would she say, if she saw her attending Godwin, "you have had a grandfather all your life, and have had your share of caresses; and he can spare no more until he has paid me the fifteen years arrears he stands indebted to me. You have another advantage over me too; you call Mr.

Mr. and Mrs. Godwin father and mother, while I say uncle and aunt, which is a very provoking circumstance, and what I shall not allow; for you shall either sink to my level, or I will rise to yours; nay, I will put it to the vote—my grandfather, and Mr. Bernard will, I know, be for me."

"You have used bribery there," replied Fanny, laughing; "for you are for ever courting my father."

"And are you proof against it?" answered Editha, throwing her arms about her neck; "can *you* refuse me?"

"Not I, indeed," returned Fanny, pressing her to her bosom. "Call me henceforward what best pleases thy affectionate heart."

"My mother, then," answered she, bending her knees before her; then turning to William Godwin as he embraced her, she added—"Ah! how happy am I to have a father who suffers me to love him, and boldly tell him so!"

The

The last sentence brought an uneasy remembrance on all; even Edith's own eyes filled with tears; but hastily wiping them off, she added—"See, I believe they are all jealous, not one congratulates me; truly I believe they *all* expect to be bribed."

"Fee them then," returned William Godwin, "and you are sure of their suffrages."

"And so I will," kissing the old men, and then Reuben; but advancing to Edward, she hesitated a moment, but at length presented her glowing cheek, saying, archly, as she replaced herself by the side of Fanny—"I am glad it is over, for Edward looked as if he would have demanded a double fee."

Some days after this conversation, Reuben found courage to address his father on the subject nearest his heart, namely, an union with Anna, his father promising to consult Mrs. Palmer, and

to let him know the result in a short time.

A council of the elders of the family were a few days after summoned to meet at Mrs. Palmer's, where it was settled that the senior Godwin, accompanied by that lady, should declare, on the ensuing Sunday at church, that Anna was the daughter of his youngest son Edwin, lately dead, but from prudential motives had been passed as the child of the elder until the present time—a truth which Mrs. Palmer would confirm. It was also resolved, that Reuben should have permission to address Anna; but that their marriage should not take place until he had attained the age of twenty-one, which was yet two years distant; and that, finally, when it did, the new-married pair should entirely reside with Mrs. Palmer, "as," added that lady, "in my life I have loved them, so at

my

my death they shall not find themselves forgotten."

These resolves were communicated to Reuben by his father, who approved all but the length of time; for which, however, he had no remedy but patience.

The declaration was accordingly made the ensuing Sunday after service; and though at first it occasioned great surprise and many whispers, yet Godwin was too greatly respected, and Mrs. Palmer too much honoured, for it to have disagreeable consequences; the old folks only recalling the piteous story of Agnes to their remembrance, who they doubted not was the mother, and relating it to their children, the girls dropping a tear at her fate; and the boys declaring that falsehood would have been impossible, had she been as handsome as Anna.

About

About six months after this event an express arrived at Mrs. Palmer's from Mrs. Fitzmorris, desiring that lady to request Mr. Godwin would permit her nephew and niece to come immediately to town, as her health, which had never been completely reestablished, declined daily. Godwin immediately consented, and Mrs. Palmer, with her usual kindness, proposed to accompany them—an event that had much weight with Mrs. Fitzmorris, who not only expressed great pleasure on their arrival, but also at the account Editha had frequently given her, by letter, of her situation.

Mrs. Fitzmorris was apparently in the last stage of a decline on their arrival, which she survived barely six weeks, leaving Mrs. Palmer, whom, in spite of her former prejudices, she was become attached to, her executrix; and William and his sister joint heirs to fifteen thousand pounds she possessed from the

death of Edwin, together with her own paternal fortune of ten thousand.

Her funeral over, and the business settled, all impatiently longed to return to Inglewood, where they were received with equal pleasure, William Godwin rejoicing that his brother's children had now their right, without the perplexities of law, or exposing the errors of a parent.

CHAPTER XIV.

Two years had passed in the calm of innocent delights, when Reuben claimed the promise of uniting him to Anna; and all was prepared accordingly, the marriage being, to the great satisfaction of Bernard, a public one; all the neighbours and tenantry were invited, Mrs. Palmer behaving in every circumstance as if it had been her own daughter.

At the altar, Bernard, who acted as father, presented the trembling hand of Anna to the enraptured Reuben, the venerable Godwin standing on the right side of the happy pair. On the ceremony being concluded, his emotion was too great to be suppressed, and, dropping on his knees, he softly ejaculated—

 "Spirits

" Spirits of peace! sainted form of my beloved wife and the gentle Agnes! for a moment may ye be permitted to witness this union!"—then, after remaining in silent devotion for a short time, he arose, saluted, and blessed them.

During some days all was rejoicing; and Edward, emboldened by the happy scene around him, pleaded his cause so successfully to Editha, who, at her sister's marriage, was in her eighteenth year, that she gave him a sort of half permission to make some proposals to his father respecting a similar event.

" Indeed, Edward," replied Godwin, " I know not what to say in this case; Editha will have a considerable fortune. However, should it even take place, I must insist on your waiting the same time as your brother Reuben; but, before we speak decidedly, your mother shall talk to Editha."

Mrs.

Mrs. Palmer being consulted on this subject, gave it in favour of Edward.— "Reuben," said she, "I now regard as mine; and Mr. Godwin's property, in common justice, ought to revert to his second son; therefore, if even you think on pecuniary matters, I cannot see a reasonable objection."

Editha was then called, and Fanny gently represented to her, that with her property she might marry far more advantageously than her own cousin Edward; and desired her to think seriously on the subject before she finally determined.

"I know not, my dear mother," replied Editha, "how you might like to part with me; but for myself, I can but answer you in the words of Ruth—'I will never leave thee; but live where thou livest, and die where thou diest; and there also will I be buried.' As to Edward," continued she, with more vivacity—

vacity—"I would not have you think I care so much for him; not but that I like him better than any young man I every saw, or in all likelihood I ever shall."

With these words away she ran, and saw the family no more until supper-time.

Suffice it, the venerable old men, Godwin and Bernard, lived to witness this union; before which event took place, their aged arms had nursed a great-grandson, and they were looking forward yet to another alliance in the family, namely, William and the youthful Agnes, for whom a house was erected adjoining Godwin's. The consolations of an upright mind attended both William Godwin and his Fanny; the former had truly spoken, their blessings could hardly admit an increase; for their children were virtuous; and they possessed not only

only the comforts of plenty, but hearts to dispense it around them.

The faithful Margery lived to behold the great-grandchildren of her respected master; and beloved by all in the weakness of age, met a grateful return for her former cares, every branch of the family endeavouring to smooth her passage to the grave.

Felix was still living; and, though enervated with age, made shift, almost daily, to walk to the farm, smoke a pipe, and drink a glass of ale with the seniors, enjoying life while it was granted him, and not fearful of leaving it.

Julia, happy in the protection of Mrs. Palmer, had not a wish unsatisfied; and, being particularly fond of children, claimed the office of nurse to the little one, who she declared almost comforted her for the loss of Scipio.

The young people, blessed in each other, regarded Mrs. Palmer as their general parent, and the immediate instrument, in the hand of Heaven, of all their happiness; while she, looking around with satisfaction on her own deeds, was insensible of the advances of age, which stole on her like a mild autumn, enriched with the fruits of summer.

THE END.

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